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**LENIN**



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LENIN

From a drawing by N. Andreyev

# LENIN

*Portrait of a Professional Revolutionary*

By  
CHRISTOPHER HOLLIS

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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C.H.

## CHAPTER I

### THE SHAPING OF A REVOLUTIONARY

“THE mode of production in material life,” wrote Karl Marx<sup>1</sup> in a well-known passage, “determines the general character of the social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness.” As the technique of production changes, the whole superstructure of laws, customs and beliefs changes too. One class, which had been top dog under one technique of production, gives place to another which is favoured by the shifting incidence of invention and economic methods. The great instance before the mind of Marx and Engels was the transition from an agricultural, feudal society to the capitalist order they knew. Society still consisted of exploiters and exploited, but the exploiters were a new class.

Nothing changes in human history save only the names of the exploiters (though that, as a very rich lady once said to me, makes all the difference).

In the apocalyptic future there was indeed to arise a new sort of oligarchy, the communists, who would use their power, not in order to establish a new exploitation but in order to free mankind. But that oligarchy, in Marx's time, was as yet uncreated. It lay in the womb of time, along with the sceptics who were to rise up and ask how it was to be created. History, as it had unrolled itself to Marx, told only of economic determinism, of unbroken greed, of the warfare between the haves and the have-nots and of men who rose

<sup>1</sup> *The Critique of Political Economy*, p. 11.

from the ranks only in order to form themselves into new classes and to exploit the ranks from which they had risen.

In accordance, then, with this inevitable law, the exploitation of the feudal system had passed away in Western Europe and given place to industrialism, with its new exploitation, the exploitation of the proletariat by the capitalist. In his turn the capitalist was inevitably destined to give place to the dictatorship of the proletariat, leading in its turn to communism. But Western Europe, in so far as it was capitalist, was ahead of the rest of the world. Capitalism and industrialism had rescued it from "the idiocy of rural life."<sup>2</sup> Other countries perhaps in their time would tread the same road, but not yet. The Revolution must certainly come first in the Western lands. The others were not for the moment worth worrying about. In particular, there was one point on which Marx was positive. The Revolution could not possibly begin in Russia.

Yet a few Russian *émigrés* had joined the First International, and in March 1870, Marx, addressing them, announced that "your country also is beginning to participate in the general movement of our age."<sup>3</sup>

Rousseau, who liked "noble savages" and found them in great plenty in the island of Corsica, thought that decency required of him some vague prophecy of a greatness that was to come to the island race. So he made the safely indefinite prediction that it would produce "something that would astonish the world." It so happened that a few years later it produced Napoleon Bonaparte, and Rousseau won for himself a reputation as a prophet that he did not greatly deserve. Marx's reputation might have been higher to-day had he taken the risk of greeting a little more warmly his poor Russian admirers. For it so happened that at the moment at which he was speaking, in the city of Simbirsk, now Ulianoff, to the north of Samara and four hundred

<sup>2</sup> *Communist Manifesto*.

<sup>3</sup> Letters, p. 2.

miles odd to the European side of Russia's intercontinental frontier, lay, eight months gone with child, the wife of a civil servant, an inspector of schools. In the next month, on 10-22 April 1870, Vladimir Ilyich Ulianov was born. His mother, Maria Alexandrovna, was the daughter of a doctor, named Berg. Vladimir was the third of six children.

Exactly two hundred years before and about half a century after the Romanov dynasty had come to Russia's throne, a wild Cossack adventurer called Stenka Razin had swept up the Volga, murdering, plundering, calling on peasants and serfs to rise against the oppressor. They took the Governor and cast him from the tower at Astrakhan. They flogged tax-collectors and broke aristocrats on the wheel. It was at Simbirsk that the regular troops met him and beat him. He fled back to his own people, but they betrayed him to the Government, who hanged him high in the public square in Moscow. Yet he left behind him among the peasants of the south-east a memory which was preserved in their folk-songs—a tradition that one day a "good Tsar" would come, who, like Razin, would kill all the rich and give freedom to the poor. There were some who thought that this "good" Tsar had come in Peter the Great, for he had killed very many. But there were others who pointed out that he might have killed more. They looked for another. Peter was not "good" enough.

There is a general verdict of mankind; and when we come across a man of violent unconventionality, who is anxious to defy laws in which most men have found the consolations of existence, curiosity for the reason is natural. There is one influence in Lenin's life that must be noted—an influence often strangely overlooked but a powerful one both in his life and in that of many other rebels. The last four centuries, and in particular the last century, have seen the expansion of restless European man, until he, who was previously the master of but a small knob of the world, has now spread himself out over a vast proportion of its area. It is customary

for the European to congratulate himself on the virility of which this expansion gives evidence, *et quant aux autres*, their opinion is not asked. And indeed it is not to be denied that virtue has been shown in this business of expansion. Yet it has not been wholly beneficent. Men have gone out to better themselves, but is the restlessness that would always be bettering itself wholly a virtue? And did the emigrants emigrate for the love of adventure, or because the selfishness of the possessors at home forced them out?

The European in Europe had his lot cast in pleasant places, and his blood is suited to a temperate climate. As he adventured abroad, he struck, it is true, every now and again some Florida or California, even pleasanter than the land that he had left. But very often economic necessity forced him to make his home in some place in which life was indeed just supportable but only supportable through a starvation of that joy in the transitions of nature which are necessary to the full being of European man. In a country of violent extremes of temperature the soul of the European is not at rest. It is not for him to live where nature is an enemy rather than a friend.

Such a place was the disgusting town of Simbirsk. The thermometer in summer rises to 115°, in winter falls to 47° below zero. In the spring there is often drought and famine, and in summer there are destructive hail-storms. Not only was it at that time isolated from the rest of the world, but throughout one-half of the year the one part of the town was even isolated from the other part, for in neither spring nor autumn was it possible to cross the Volga to the suburbs of the left bank. Only during winter and summer could the journey be made, in winter over the ice and in summer by boat across a free river. Nor must it be forgotten that in the Russia of seventy years ago there were none of those comforts of cool air in summer and hot air in winter, which make life in an American town of not dissimilar climate just tolerable. The background of Simbirsk must be remembered. *Вспомни-*

gance and misanthropy in philosophy are not surprising in one whose formative years were spent in such a place.

Four years before Lenin's birth there had been in existence a small group of student revolutionaries under the leadership of one Ishutin. They gave to their society the melodramatic name of "Hell." Their programme was to murder the Tsar Alexander II and establish a dictatorship of themselves. On 4 April 1866, the attempt was made by Ishutin's cousin, Karakozov, and failed. The natural result of failure was a campaign of vigorous repression by the Government against the Revolutionary Narodnik movement. By the spring of 1874 the movement was apparently suppressed, and in 1876 its members formed themselves into a new secret society, which came later to be known as the Land and Liberty Society. It derived its name from that of its secret newspaper. It consisted of those members of the intelligentsia, who had, in a dedicatory spirit, gone to live among the peasants of the villages in order both to minister to them and at the same time to instil into them revolutionary ideas. While it was working for ultimate revolution and while its activities were of course condemned and persecuted by the Government, the society was not at first committed to immediate and overt terrorism. Yet its members were certainly men and women who felt that they

"need not strive  
Officially to keep alive,"<sup>4</sup>

and it was not long before the Land and Liberty Society split into two groups, the People's Liberty group and the Black Redistribution group. Meanwhile there were also formed a South Russian Workers' Union and a North Russian Workers' Union. Of the two groups the People's Liberty was frankly terroristic. The first necessity, it proclaimed, was to assassinate the Tsar, the symbol of autocracy. Only then would it be possible to go forward to the establishment of the socia-

<sup>4</sup> Arthur Hugh Clough, *Modern Decalogues*.

listic state. The Black Redistribution group pleaded rather for a policy of agitation and propaganda; its chief was Plekhanov, who had gained prominence by his leadership of the demonstrations for freedom in St. Petersburg in 1876. But there was in no sense a breach between it and the terrorist group. Their difference was rather a difference concerning the tactics to which each would personally devote itself. No attempt was made by either to frustrate the tactics of the other.

This was the Russia in whose atmosphere the young Lenin grew up, and it is important to understand what were the creeds for which these revolutionaries were prepared to die and to kill. It is important but not easy. For there was lack of definiteness in their ideas. There were anarchists who looked to Bakunin as their leader. Their creed imposed upon them very clearly an obligation to overthrow the ruling regime. Yet, anarchical as against the established order, they were under obligation to submit themselves entirely to the authority of their revolutionary leaders. The rank-and-file revolutionaries must be content to be what Bakunin's friend, Nechaieff, called "conspiracy-fodder," and, when his close comrade, Ivanov, "seemed unreliable," Nechaieff without hesitation had him murdered.<sup>5</sup> Nor was it easy to discover from these anarchists, any more than it is from their Spanish descendants to-day, what was to happen when the regime had been overthrown.

Then there was the nihilist, of whom Bazarov in Turgenev's *Father and Son* is the best example, who declared war not only on the political regime but on all "the conventional lies of civilized mankind"<sup>6</sup>—such as art and politeness and, of course, Christianity. There were the followers of Ishutin, who demanded a dictatorship of themselves to tide the country through its time of crisis and to whom the notion that the time of crisis might ever come to an end was appar-

<sup>5</sup> Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, vol. I, p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> Kropotkin, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, p. 207.

ently so foreign that they had never formulated a policy with which to meet it. There were the socialists under Plekhanov, but their socialism was as yet in no way Marxian. Marx was not translated into Russian until 1872 and had little or no influence among the early Russian revolutionaries, who, if they thought of him at all, thought of him as too conservative for their taste. Bakunin denounced him as a pan-German. Indeed his theories simply did not apply to the Russia of that date. For that Russia was neither industrial nor capitalist. It was an agrarian country with entirely agrarian problems. The serf had been liberated in 1861, and his liberation had been followed not, as had been hoped, by peace and contentment but by outbreaks of rioting all over the country. For the allotments of land, which the newly emancipated peasants had received, were insufficient for his maintenance, and vast areas were still left in the ownership of the old landlords. "When the harvest is normal", an agricultural committee was to report to Count Witte in 1903, "the peasant obtains 30 per cent less nutriment than is physiologically required."

There are therefore three important characteristics to be noted concerning the revolutionaries of the 1870's. First, their constructive aims were chaotic. Revolutionary differed from revolutionary, and even within the individual's own brain were to be found contradictory ambitions for anarchy and a new order, for peace and violence, which no ingenuity could reconcile. The practical observer could not but conclude that, if the revolutionaries should succeed in overthrowing the established order, they would be unable to put in its place anything save a senseless anarchy, which would either continue indefinitely or else be in the end itself overthrown by a reactionary movement, which in a subsequent age would have been called fascism but which the pre-war revolutionaries used to call Bonapartism.

"Kill the members of the Tsar's party unsparingly, as it

<sup>1</sup> Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, vol. I, p. 45.



doesn't spare us now," wrote the wild young student revolutionary Zaichnevsky, author of *Young Russia*, whom the communist historian Pokrovsky has selected as the mid nineteenth-century Russian forerunner of Lenin. "Kill them on the squares, if the scoundrels venture to appear there; kill them in their homes; kill them in the narrow alleys of the towns; kill them on the broad streets of the capital; kill them in the villages. Remember that whoever is not with us is against us; whoever is against us is our enemy and enemies must be exterminated by all means. But do not forget at every victory and in every battle to repeat, Long live the Russian social and democratic republic."<sup>8</sup> It is a programme of which it is a fair criticism to say that it is stronger on the destructive than on the constructive side.

Secondly, the revolutionary movement was as yet in no way a movement of the proletariat. Among the revolutionaries were found of course a few exceptional working men, just as there were found in this, as in all revolutionary movements, a few exceptional aristocrats of the type of Prince Kropotkin or of Plekhanov himself. Yet for the most part it was a movement of the middle-class intellectual—of the class which was able to obtain an education but to whom, under the autocratic regime, there was no sufficient opening for the use of the talents which it possessed and had cultivated. It was into this class, of course, incidentally that Lenin was born, the son of a schoolmaster, of a member of that profession most fertile in the begetting of revolutionaries. For instance, even in little Simbirsk itself there was another schoolmaster's family, in which the children were growing up full of revolutionary notions, the family of Kerensky, the headmaster of the high school in which Lenin was entered as a pupil in 1879 at the age of nine.<sup>9</sup>

The peasants were unsympathetic to revolution. When the middle-class revolutionaries attempted to carry through

<sup>8</sup> Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, vol. I, p. 27.

<sup>9</sup> There was also living in Simbirsk in these years Protopopov, afterwards to be the last Tsarist Minister of the Interior

their policy of going down to the peasants, living among them and teaching them, the peasants, not comprehending such eccentricities and thinking with some shrewdness that the only consequence of them would be trouble, often denounced their would-be liberators to the authorities and were very glad to be rid of them. "From all corners of our enormous land," Herzen the exuberant revolutionary had cried to the intellectuals in the middle of the century, "from the Don and the Ural, from the Volga and the Dnieper, a moan is growing, a grumbling is rising—this is the first roar of the sea-billow, which begins to rage, pregnant with storm, after a long and tiresome calm. *V narod.* To the people. This is your place, O exiles of knowledge."<sup>10</sup> But it was easier said than done. When some years before an eccentric, philanthropic landlord, Petrachevsky, had built some model homes for his tenants, the peasants, thinking that he was only a crank who would get them into trouble, went secretly by night and burnt them down.

Thirdly, the revolutionaries, with all their absurdities, were terribly in earnest. They were not content to stop at speeches, play-acting and resolutions. There are "parlour Bolsheviks" in Russia, but it is never safe to trust a Russian to keep his Bolshevism in the parlour. He will sit round and debate interminably whether murder be a duty and theft a virtue, whether there is any validity in laws human and divine, but there always remains a horrible chance that he will act on his lack of faith. Russians live always on a volcano, and it is significant that even the Tsarist regime in its national anthem dared to pray no larger prayer than "Grant to us peace in our time, O Lord."

They were, I say, terribly in earnest. When they preached terrorism, they also practised it, and a steady succession of outrages and attempted outrages were there to prove their earnestness. At last on 19 April—1 March 1881, when Lenin was just short of his eleventh birthday and had been for

<sup>10</sup> Cited in Kornilov, *Modern Russian History*, vol. II, p. 208.

rather more than a year a pupil at the Simbirsk High School, the blunder of April 1866 was atoned for. The executive committee of the People's Liberty group asked for volunteers for their supreme task of the assassination of the Tsar. Forty-seven offered themselves and from among them a few were selected. As the Tsar was driving along the St. Catherine's Canal in St. Petersburg, one of them, Rysakov, hurled a bomb under his carriage. The Tsar was unhurt, but one of his escort was wounded. The Tsar stopped to inquire after the wounded man, whereupon another revolutionary, Ginevitsky, hurled a second bomb in whose explosion both Tsar and assassin perished.

The very success of the attempt most fully demonstrated the utter impracticality of the People's Liberty party. It had been their faith that, with the assassination of the Tsar, the whole machinery of autocracy would automatically collapse and the anarchy for which they were working spontaneously appear. It is hard to understand how they can have come to hold so simple a faith. For history, both in Russia and elsewhere, was rich enough in precedents, and its lesson was unquestionably that the machinery of a long-established autocracy is by no means dependent on the accident of the autocrat's life. Had they been prepared with some plan for striking a further blow during the confusion of an unexpected transfer of power, their tactics would have been at the least not quite demonstrably inadequate, though it is unlikely that even so they could have been successful. For there was as yet no sufficient public opinion in Russia ready for revolution. But, as it was, the event proved them quite patently stamped with futility. For, having killed the Tsar, they were found without any further plan of campaign at all. And, having no notion what to do, they did nothing.

Faced only with such futility, the Government was easily able to regain the initiative. The revolutionary organizations were themselves filled with its spies, and it was not difficult to lay by the heels all the leaders of the People's Liberty



Lenin as a schoolboy



group. Five, who had been clearly implicated in the assassination, were executed, and the rest were imprisoned in the fortress of Schlüsselburg, from which they were only to be released after the revolution of 1905. It was a revenge which by modern standards would seem absurdly inadequate, for the Tsarist regime, though denounced in its day as a tyranny, was a great deal more humane than its successor, and the punishment was judged sufficient by the opinion of a less progressive day. Plekhanov's Black Redistribution party had not been personally implicated, but they had maintained relations with the People's Liberty group. Its members were in the position of prisoner's friends, and they found it the better part of valour to withdraw abroad, Plekhanov himself to Geneva.

Plekhanov was the leader of the group. His chief lieutenants were Axelrod and the woman, Vera Zasulich, who some years before had won fame for herself by publicly shooting at Trepov, the hated chief of police, and who had been acquitted owing to the exuberance of popular favour. They established themselves at Geneva, and there founded the Liberation of Labour group, a Russian workers' party. They issued a Library of Contemporary Socialism and Plekhanov composed and published his *Socialism and the Political Struggle*.

The work of this group and of Plekhanov in particular was of the first importance. For up till now, as has been argued, the Russian revolutionary movement had been primarily Russian, offering its solution for a peculiarly Russian problem, coming but little into contact with European movements, knowing but little of Europe save that her problems were not their problems and united with Europe in little more than a vague camaraderie of revolt. The events of 1881 had however impressed Plekhanov with a profound conviction of the futility of mere nihilism. He went abroad, ready to learn, and in Switzerland he came in touch with Western European socialism, with the Marxian creed. He

lapped it up eagerly, perhaps too eagerly, forgetting that not only was he a Russian but also a bourgeois and that, if economic determinism be true, then men cannot be traitors to their class, even if they would. He perhaps also in time fell into the opposite fault to that of his predecessors. He tended to forget how different were Russian conditions from those of Western Europe.

It was Plekhanov's argument that mere planless terrorism was a futility. It was necessary rather to organize throughout Russia a social-democratic party of workers and peasants. To look for revolution to members of the middle-class intelligentsia was a folly. For the middle-class, while it might have many grievances against the Tsardom, yet had its own privileges and its own way of life, which was very different from that of the proletarian worker. The middle-class, if it made a revolution, would merely strip the autocracy and aristocracy of privileges, in order to establish the more firmly its own privileges in their room, just as in Western Europe the capitalist had overthrown the feudal lord in order to step into his place. The middle-class would use the worker and then betray him. It was rather the task of the Russian Marxian to bide his time and then, when the moment came, to make at once two revolutions in one—the revolution against the landlord and the revolution against the capitalist, both included in the comprehensively abusive term "bourgeois." The time for such a revolution was not yet, but it would inevitably come, for the capitalists were digging their own graves. The age of foreign investment had dawned. French and German and British capital was pouring into the country, and the country's industrialism, and with it its proletarian population, was growing with every year. And Russia's industrialism was a low-wage industrialism and must necessarily remain so. For it was only the lowness of Russian wages, promising correspondingly high dividends, which attracted the European capital to Russia at all. The number of Russians who had "nothing to lose

but their chains" was growing with every year, and with patience an eventual victory for the Revolution was certain.

Plekhanov's programme was not quite identical with the programme that was later to triumph with Lenin, but it was moving towards Lenin's programme. It was a great deal nearer to Lenin's programme than the programme, if we may call it so, in whose name poor, mad Ginevitsky blew up the Tsar Alexander and himself. And it will probably occur to the critic to say that Plekhanov was at any rate sane, that there were here at any rate the beginnings of a coherent aim and propositions on whose value it was possible to hold rational debate. That is all certainly true. Yet there were some weights in the other balance, too. The policy of terrorism was vile and horrible, the more vile and the more horrible because of its sheer fatuity. Yet love and hate did in a measure meet one another in its fatuity. It is hard to see what practical purpose was served by the intellectuals who went out to share the suffering life of the poor. But at least it can be said of the best of them that they did love the poor and that, when they revolted against Christianity, it was because of Christians' lack of love for one another—a reason insufficient in logic but at least an evidence of a certain relic of "faith unfaithful." The socialism of the *émigré* was more coherent in logic; it was less puerile. It was more reasonable to reserve the use of the weapons of terrorism until they were likely to be effective. But there was something horrible, too, in the coldness of its calculations. If we must have murderers, it is more human that they should be a little mad. It is the very sanity of Plekhanov's programme that repels. For with Plekhanov Christianity has met a new enemy. He quarrels with Christianity not, like the old socialists, because it has not taught men love but because it has taught it—because it has infected men with the weakening emotions of love and pity and chivalry and the quality of mercy, and these weaknesses must be stamped out so that the cause may triumph.



Plekhanov and his friends fled from Russia after Alexander's assassination, and, as has been said, the members of the People's Liberty group went either to their scaffold or to prison. Yet it did not take long, in nineteenth-century Russia, to breed new revolutionaries. In spite of the exposure of the futility of isolated acts of terrorism yet there were still a few ardent and unbalanced youths who preferred that path to Plekhanov's cold and scientific and calculated way. They were not many. Vera Figner, a member of the People's Liberty group, tells in her *Memoirs* how three bombs had been prepared for the assassination of the Tsar Alexander II and only two used. A meeting was therefore held, at which it was proposed that the third bomb be used on the new Tsar, Alexander III. The logic of their philosophy demanded such a policy, but even such strange beings were not quite inhuman. Their nerves were sick with murder, and against all their principles they vetoed the project. On a wave of reaction many of the revolutionaries swung back to the doctrines of pacifism and non-resistance, which Tolstoy was then preaching.

For a few years there were no outrages, and then in 1886 there grew up a new party in St. Petersburg, in whose eyes both the followers of Tolstoy and the followers of Plekhanov were backsliders. To them the old People's Liberty group were the only true revolutionaries, and they alone possessed the true apostolic succession of the People's Liberty. Their leader was one Shevyrev. Ulianov, the old school inspector, had just died. His eldest son, Alexander, was a student at St. Petersburg and, with parental restraint removed, he threw himself eagerly into the revolutionary movement and established himself as Shevyrev's second-in-command.

They plotted together to murder the new Tsar, Alexander III. But plotting is a fine art, and the young students were hopelessly inexperienced, while the police had learnt their lesson from the catastrophe of six years before. They were a great deal more alert than they had been then. The

whole plot was known to them, and the conspirators were seized long before they had come within sight of its execution. There was no doubt about their guilt. Alexander Ulianov on his trial publicly confessed and gloied in it. He defended murder, it is curious to note, not as the weapon of a people against a tyrant but specifically as the weapon of a minority against a majority. "Terror," he said in his trial, "is the sole form of defence left to a minority, strong only in spiritual force and in the consciousness of rightness against the consciousness of physical force of the majority."<sup>11</sup> It was a challenge to democracy as much as it was a challenge to autocracy. Alexander was condemned and executed.

His seventeen-year-old brother was at the time in his last term at Simbirsk High School, which he was to leave a month or two afterwards, having gained the first prize, awarded to the head of the school. "Very gifted, consistently painstaking and regular in his attendance," ran the report upon him of Kerensky *père*. His family was a revolutionary family, and he had already, in schoolboy fashion, played with revolutionary theories. But it was, as all his biographers agree, the execution of his brother—a beloved elder brother—which stamped upon him the determination to dedicate his life to revolution. It made a mark upon his soul which was never effaced, and thenceforward to the end his life had in it but one purpose. That being so, it is clear that the execution of Alexander Ulianov had a fortuitous importance in history, far greater than either he or his executioners can have ever dreamed. It is worth while to delay upon it.

There are writers who speak as if Alexander had been the victim of some great injustice at the hands of the Tsarist regime, as if Lenin, thus taught by a horrible object lesson how wholly evil that regime was, swore his Hannibal's oath of eternal hatred to the Romanov. The recital of the facts is sufficient to show how unbalanced is this sentimental picture. It is clear that Alexander was the victim of no

<sup>11</sup> *Alexander Ilyitch Ulianov and the Cause of March, 1887*, pp. 324, 343.

injusticc. Ulianov was a self-confessed would-be murderer. Neither he nor his family had suffered any extremity at the hands of the Tsar, such as might go some way to excuse such a remedy. There were beyond doubt many evils in the social conditions of Russia, but the very revolutionaries themselves, having tried it, had confessed that murdering the Tsar was no remedy for these conditions. It made things not better but worse. It destroyed the very conditions out of which alone a remedy could be found. Alexander Ulianov was the sort of man whom the later Lenin in power would have shot after five minutes of questioning. "No, we shall get nowhere along this road; it is not the right one," said Lenin to his sister concerning Alexander's faith.<sup>12</sup>

It is sufficiently evident that Alexander Ulianov's philosophy differed very radically from that of his younger brother. Indeed not only did they differ; they were in many ways the opposite of one another. The later Lenin was to kill—to kill remorselessly, ruthlessly and in enormous number. But there was no element of spiritual exaltation about his killing, no sentimental romanticizing about minorities just because they were minorities. He removed obstacles from his path because they were obstacles, like Caliban neither loving nor hating,<sup>13</sup> and reckoning nothing whether the obstacles were 51 per cent of the population or only 49 per cent.

Even where Alexander's extravagances came nearest to contact with common sense, it was, it so happened, a sort of common sense to which Lenin was particularly blind. The Christian traditions do not, it is true, bid us rise up and murder our governors, but they do insist, more perhaps than on any other secular truth, that the possession of power does carry with it terrifying temptations, that only by the grace of God can rich men squeeze through the eyes of needles, that "I am amongst you as One that serveth," that the proudest of human rulers can only hope to be saved in so

<sup>12</sup> Ralph Fox, *Lenin*, p. 16.

<sup>13</sup> Browning, "Caliban on Setebos."

far as he humbly confesses himself to be the servant of the servants of God. The paradox of the first who shall be last and the last who shall be first is deep engraved upon every page of Christian history. Alexander's remedy was worse than the disease, but he was right to see that there was a disease. He was right to see that there must always be power and that, where there was power, there would be abuse of power and that life could only be kept tolerable if a machinery for a protest against abuse was preserved. Lenin was later to show himself alive to the dangers of bureaucracy, but it was the dictatorship itself which was to keep the bureaucracy in bounds. He accepted the apocalyptic faith which Marx had inherited from his Jewish ancestors, that the day of the Lord was at hand and that, with the coming to power of the communists, at last there would be a ruling party which did not erect itself into a ruling class—a party which need not itself be curbed in its exercise of power, for it would freely work for the day when the State would "wither away."

Napoleon scattered his brothers over the thrones of Europe, and old Madame Mère muttered, "It's wonderful what the boys have come to." But with all his contempt for bourgeois morality Lenin was as loyal to the Ulianovs as ever was Napoleon to the Bonapartes. A model son, a model husband, a model brother, he was most human in the domestic circle, and it is not fantastic to see the whole vast saga of his life as a gigantic (though, of course, unconscious), family feud. The capitalist system had struck down an Ulianov, therefore the capitalist system must die. But by what weapons it should die, whether he would find it convenient to use against it the arguments that his brother had used against it, that was but a small detail. He would use such arguments as might be convenient.

Lenin finished his high school course at Simbirsk at about the same time as that of his brother's execution, and he went on in the autumn to the University of Kazan, where he was admitted into the College of Law. It was the first time that

he had left home. And, though Kazan, which lies some two hundred miles to the north of Simbirsk, is not by any metropolitan standards the hub of the universe—indeed in the 1880's it differed from Simbirsk rather by being larger than by being less unpleasant—yet it was a capital and a university city. It was a city, too, where Mongol and Slav, Moham-medan and Christian met. The *muezzin* called the Faithful to prayer from its thirteen mosques, which jostled themselves against its Christian churches. To journey to it was to adventure into the world.

Lenin does not seem to have had any of the traditional bashfulness of the undergraduate who has left for the first time a middle-class home. There was never a time in his life in which he was content to be seen and not heard. He profited by freedom to throw himself at once into revolutionary activity, and before Christmas had come he had succeeded in getting himself expelled for participation in student disturbances. His sister, Anna, was already in trouble with the police. Doubtless owing to their relationship to Alexander it was not difficult for the Ulianovs to fall into trouble. And Lenin was sent to join her on his grandmother's estate in the little village of Kokushkimo in the Kazan province. His neighbours were mostly Tartars and Tartar-speaking, for in that part of the world the country people are Tartar and the townspeople Russian. In such isolation there was little to do, so it was not surprising that he should spend his time reading Marx's *Capital*, which he does not seem to have come across before.

There is no record of any sudden conversion, of a new planet that swum into his ken. He was not made like that. Yet here was stuff that was worth considering, and it so happened that in the next year Plekhanov's Liberation of Labour group formally founded the Russian Social-Democratic movement, which was definitely Marxian, and began to try to establish little Marxian groups throughout all Russia. Therefore, when the police refused Lenin permission

to re-enter the University of Kazan, he applied for permission to go abroad. If he was to earn his living he must be allowed to obtain a university degree somewhere and, if it was not to be obtained in Russia, then they must let him go abroad. Permission was however refused, for the police thought, and probably rightly, that he would join up with Plekhanov and the revolutionaries. Therefore he went back again into the country and devoted himself to the organization of Marxist groups and to the establishment of contact with other such groups in other parts of the country. In the summer of 1889 he went south down the Volga to Samara and presented himself to the authorities there and begged for leave to take his final examinations, for which by now he had prepared himself by private study. He was again refused and it was not until 1891 that he was finally allowed to take them as an external student at St. Petersburg.

When we remember that these were the years during which he passed from the ages of seventeen to twenty-one, it is hard to deny that Lenin was very foolishly treated. Of all cures for disruptive opinions idleness is the worst. The best policy to adopt towards undergraduates who talk nonsense is to let them alone—certainly not to expel them from universities. What are universities for except for undergraduates to talk nonsense in? You might as well blame the kettle because there is steam coming out of its spout. But if—as may well have been—there was a strange earnestness, a compulsive character about Lenin's talk, which made it impossible to treat it as undergraduate's chatter, or if to ask of the Russian police a respect for liberal learning was to ask an impossibility, then they would have been wisest, having expelled him from the university, to have allowed him to get out of the country and to have kept him out. The solution which they did adopt—that of forbidding him everything—was the worst solution of all. It almost compelled him to agitate, if only to pass the time.

Meanwhile, with Lenin agitating and in idleness and

reading law in Russia, Plekhanov abroad was busy transforming the Russian Revolutionary movement by strengthening the bonds which united it to the revolutionary movements of the Western countries. In 1889 he attended the first conference at Paris of the Second International as delegate to the Russian Social-Democratic party.

Ideas were abroad. Yet, as Lord Bacon shrewdly observed, ideas of themselves are not sufficiently potent to make revolutions. There are not enough people who are interested in them. It needs the compulsive power of hunger to turn them to practice, and beyond doubt the failure of the harvest and the consequent widespread famine of 1891 did increase the strength of the revolutionary movement within Russia. And reasonably so, for the hungry now found educated revolutionaries, not only prepared, as twenty years before, to identify themselves with their sufferings—for which they said "Thank you for nothing"—but ready with a plausible tale of how those sufferings had come and how they might be remedied.

Lenin, along with many others, was busy with this task of improving the opportunity which suffering had offered. After he had finished with the St. Petersburg Law School, he had gone down to Samara, the metropolis of his own part of the country, a nascent industrial centre and by consequence possessed of a proletarian population. There he began his career as a professional revolutionary. He formed a Marxian group, of which the other leading members were Lalayants and Sklyarenko, who afterwards, with the usual Bolshevik contempt for names and a more than usual consideration for those who have to remember them, called himself instead by the simpler name of Popov.

Yet Lenin soon came to the conclusion that revolutions are made in capitals. He had in him none of the Christian mysticism which sees all souls as of equal value in the sight of God and still less of the democratic mysticism, which sees all votes as of equal value in the eyes of the professional politi-



Lenin in 1897





cian. It was important to master the philosophy of revolution, but the philosophy was valueless unless you had also mastered a technique of its application. It took him but a few months to see that it was fatuous to dissipate energies in an uncoordinated propaganda here, there and everywhere under the belief that the walls of Jericho would automatically fall as soon as you had convinced 51 per cent of the population that their fall was desirable. Capture rather the key-places. Or, if the hour for capture had not yet arrived, at any rate paralyse the government at its centre. Until that was done, energy expended on the provinces was energy wasted. When the central machinery was thrown into chaos, then anarchy would spread throughout the provinces and give positive revolution its opportunity. France was the country of revolutions, and France's revolutions, his reading told him, had been made in Paris, in indifference to the will of the provinces, in opposition to the will of the provinces.

So, in August of 1893, he moved up to St. Petersburg, a strange Dick Whittington of the underworld, there to try his luck. He was admitted to the Bar in September, and he accepted the prospect of a double life—that outwardly of a practising lawyer, in reality a secret underground plotter. He fell into the company of men whose names were as strange as their activities, Krzhizhanovsky, for instance, a friend who, as we shall see, was to play a considerable part in his Siberian and later life. He fell into the company, among others of Nadezhda Konstantine Krupskaya, who was to become his wife, with whom he was to share the whole adventure of his life in habits which showed very clearly his preference in practice for that bourgeois morality which he repudiated most strongly in theory. Krupskaya was an ardent revolutionary, and with her there came into Lenin's life a new tie, binding him yet more closely to the revolutionary cause—a new family tie.

Tactics were all-important. It was to Lenin's mind necessary to work for revolution, to work against the established

order. But it was as necessary to work against revolutionaries who were pursuing the wrong tactics and who would spoil the cause as it had so often been spoiled in the past. This was no time for a United Front of those who were united only in a muddled protest against things as they were. Better, since the revolutionaries must in any event be in a minority, to lose in numbers, if such a loss was necessary, in order to make sure that the minority that remained faithful remained also clear-headed. At about the time of Lenin's arrival in St. Petersburg the Narodniki, or peasant-socialists, had formed a new party called the People's Right under the leadership of N. K. Michailovsky. This to Lenin's mind was all rubbish. The peasants were not socialists and the socialists were not peasants. The time might come when it would be expedient for the socialists to use the peasants—but that was another story. It would be a fatal blunder to admit them to an intellectual partnership.

The Narodniki in Berne formed the Union of the Russian Revolution and issued a paper, the *Russian Worker*. At the same time the famine and the growth of industrialism in Russia was tempting labour from the country to the town. The industrialists sought to take advantage of its abundance in order to force down wages. This attempt gave the Marxians their first opportunity to give evidence of their strength and they were able to inflict upon Russian industry a series of strikes extending throughout the year 1894. It was their triumph. The workers, it is true, gained little or no immediate benefit from the strikes, but then it is not of course the communist purpose to wrest from strikes better immediate conditions of hours or labour for the workers. They use whatever may chance to be the workers' passing grievances. Their purpose is not with the remedy of grievances, which, in accordance with their teaching, are not capable of remedy under capitalism but to weaken the whole regime and structure of society, in order to bring nearer the day of its collapse. In this they were certainly successful in 1894.

It was, to Lenin's mind, of the first importance that the revolutionaries should not lose their advantage by being tempted into making terms with agrarianism. There was to his mind no solution either in peasant proprietorship or even in primitive village communism. Indeed it was his argument that Russian agriculture was rapidly becoming capitalist—and a good thing, too, for capitalism was a step on the road to communism. The agrarian problem could only be solved by the submission of the land to development by a centralized communist regime, and, if the peasants were not yet ready for such a solution, it was better to delay rather than to ruin all through anxiety to obtain support. Therefore he wrote and published illegally—it was his first published work—a pamphlet entitled *Who are the Friends of the People and how they fight against the Social-Democrats*. It has only partially survived, but what has survived is sufficient to show that it contained in full measure the distinguishing characteristic of Lenin's style—rudeness, indeed unmeasured abuse of fellow revolutionaries. Its purpose was to warn revolutionaries against the seductions of the Narodniki. It ended with a bold prophecy which Lenin himself perhaps at the time hardly believed but which the pious were later to exhumate as proof of the divine intuition of the Man of Destiny. "The Russian worker," he wrote, "rising at the head of all the democratic elements, will overthrow absolutism and lead the Russian proletariat (together with the proletariat of all countries) along the direct road of open political struggle to the victorious Communist Revolution."

There was another social-democrat, Peter Struve, who also wrote at about this time *Critical Remarks on the Question of the Economic Development of Russia*. Lenin did not trust him—and rightly not from his point of view. For he afterwards was what he called a legal Marxist, who argued with Bernstein that Marx's prophecy of the 1840's had been falsified by the rise in the standard of living of the working class in the latter half of the nineteenth century, that this

error of the earlier Marx had been in a measure recognized by the later Marx and that the possibility of peaceful progress towards socialism rendered unnecessary the resort to revolution. He afterwards boxed the compass, turning from Marxism to liberalism and then finally from liberalism to monarchy. Lenin replied to him in a lecture which was subsequently published called *The Reflection of Marxism in Bourgeois Literature*. He agreed with Struve in his criticism of the romantic Narodniki who spoke of "good old times" before the coming of capitalism. But whereas capitalism was an advance on feudalism, it was, argued Lenin, only a step on the road towards communism. It was of its nature unstable, doomed to collapse and by no means to be accepted as a tolerable end.

At the end of that year, in November, Alexander III died and Nicholas II, the last of the Romanovs, succeeded him. Alexander II, the liberator of the serfs, had fallen by the assassin's bomb, and it had been his successor's faith that petty concessions only encouraged disorder and that the people respected, obeyed and even preferred firmness. Some of them did; others did not, but at any rate there had been no concessions during the third Alexander's reign. Yet, as always happens, there had been rumours that things would be different when the next Tsar came. However such liberal hopes were doomed to disappointment. On 5-17 January 1895, Nicholas II denounced as "senseless dreams" a petition of the Tver zemstvo, or local council, that some say in general administration might be granted to zemstvos. Meanwhile the literary battle between the Marxians and the Narodniki raged merrily and, in order that they might support their side of it the more effectively, the Liberation of Labour group—Plekhanov's group—decided to form a Union of Russian Social-Democrats—to co-ordinate, that is to say, the Marxian Social-Democratic groups scattered throughout Russia, which were all to submit to the discipline of the exiles who could issue their orders from the free base in Switzerland

On this business Lenin went abroad in April—his first trip out of Russia.

He was abroad from April till October or November of that year, visiting Austria, Switzerland, France and Germany. We have the letters which he wrote to his mother. Pleasant, gossipy, dutiful letters they are. Lenin was at his best in his domestic relations, and to his mother, of whom after the death of his father and brother he always felt himself the protector, he was always particularly charming and tender. Naturally enough the letters speak nothing of his real business. They are filled only with the ordinary gossip of a young man on a trip—how he can manage in French but how ashamed he is of his clumsiness in German, that Paris is cheap but Switzerland dear, that he has been to the theatre but that really he enjoys more just to moon about and observe the people and their habits. Could his mother let him have a little more money? And, after six or seven months of it, he, just like many another young man on his first trip abroad, began to sigh for home again. For Lenin, who knew nothing of patriotism, knew always plenty of homesickness, "Visiting is all very well but home is best," he writes from Berlin in August.<sup>14</sup>

It is not possible to trace exactly what it was that he had really been doing. But we know that when he was in Switzerland, besides consulting the doctor of whom he wrote to his mother, he also made the acquaintance of Plekhanov and the other leaders of the Liberation of Labour group. Karl Radek in *Portraits and Pamphlets* quotes the impression that the young man of twenty-five made on one of them, Axelrod. Axelrod subsequently became a Menshevik, a bitter opponent of Lenin's regime and had no reason at all to love him. Yet he has recorded, "I felt then that I had to do with the future chief of the Russian Revolution. He was not only an educated Marxist—of these there were very many—but he

knew what he wants to do and how it is necessary to do this. He smacked of the Russian land."<sup>15</sup>

"He smacked of the Russian land." What did he mean? He cannot have meant that Lenin had about him the air of a countryman, for that he certainly had not. He meant rather that the language that he spoke was a language based on reality, that he was in touch with the actual conditions of Russia. It was the weakness of the Liberation of Labour group, a weakness that the more intelligent among them were ready to recognize that they had left Russia, most of them, some fourteen years before at the beginning of the reign of Alexander III, when Russia's industrialism was only at its beginning. Between 1881 and 1896 the number of workers in Russian factories increased from 770,000 to 1,742,000.<sup>16</sup> Of the all-important question how the Russian worker was reacting to industrial and political conditions, their knowledge was merely academic. The leader who was to bring them to victory must be a leader who had seen those conditions with his own eyes. That leader had at last arrived.

<sup>15</sup> Karl Radek, *Portraits and Pamphlets*, p. 21.

<sup>16</sup> T. G. Masaryk, *Spirit of Russia*, vol. I, p. 163.

## CHAPTER II

### SIBERIA

LENIN had had his interviews with the leaders in Switzerland. But in Germany his real business, or one of his businesses, had been to arrange machinery by which the literature, which the Swiss exiles printed, might be smuggled into and distributed through Russia. They used in turn all the usual dodges of time-honoured smuggling—invisible ink, code, letters sown into the bindings of books and the like. Arrived in St. Petersburg, Lenin at once settled down in lodgings and his pleasant letters to his mother recommence. No, he has not been to the Hermitage Gallery; he does not care to go alone. The weather is warm and his overcoat is quite sufficient. He has been to see the tomb of his little sister, Olga, who had died in the plague of typhus four years before, "Everything is in order—both the cross and the wreath," he reported,<sup>1</sup> taking, it seems, no exception to the cross. He was keeping accounts for the first time in his life. He found that from 28 August–9 September to 27 September–9 October his expenditure was 54 roubles and 30 copecks. Of these 16 roubles were for clothes and books—expenditure that would not be recurrent—but even 38 roubles a month was, he said, too much. He must find means of reducing it. When we remember that a rouble was only worth about two shillings in English or fifty cents in American money, we can see that it was no elaborate luxury in which he allowed himself to live.

At the same time that he was corresponding with his mother, he was conducting another correspondence—with

<sup>1</sup> Letter 6.



Axelrod in Switzerland—a correspondence in code and without signatures and hedged about with every such precaution. He had organized the Union for the Struggle of the Liberation of the Working Class, and he was writing pamphlets on its behalf and preparing for the publication of an illegal newspaper, the *Rabocheye Delo*, or Workers' Cause. It was Axelrod's task to supply him with foreign news and with extracts from the foreign socialist newspapers which were barred from Russia. It was the essence of tactics, according to Lenin, to know where to concentrate your offensive. And, just as he had already argued against the Narodniki that for the moment attack must be concentrated on the industrial workers, so a selection must be made within industry of the place where attack was most likely to be fruitful. He therefore made his selection of Thornton's, the big English-owned textile manufacturers. The point of this selection was that Russia's rapid industrialization was dependent upon a large and continuing import of foreign capital. The domestic Russian capitalist might perhaps have a local pride in his creation and fight an obstinate battle against ruin, but the foreign capitalist—the ultimate moneylender in London—cared nothing whether his money went to Russia or to some other country. He only sent it to Russia because his prospects of profit there seemed good. A few labour disturbances, and the foreign capitalist, the argument ran, will easily take flight and seek to transfer his capital to some safer land. On the other hand a rapid withdrawal of foreign capital from Russian investments could easily bring the whole system collapsing into ruins. Lenin's plotting had its effect and in June of the next year, 1896, there was a long strike of some 30,000 textile workers in St. Petersburg, the communists taking advantage of the workers' very reasonable discontent at their long hours. The demand of the strikers was only a reduction of their hours to 10½ a day and, whatever the motives of its real organizers, the strike was certainly in itself justified.

Lenin was not present to see the success of his own tactics. For the police were by now well awake, and in December 1895, just as the first number of the *Workers' Cause* was ready to go to press, Lenin and the other St. Petersburg revolutionary leaders were all arrested. He had to spend the next fourteen months—the months during which his policy at Thornton's was developing—in prison in St. Petersburg. His treatment there was not intolerably severe. "I have everything I need and even more than I need. . . . My health is satisfactory," he wrote to his sister.<sup>2</sup> His relatives were allowed to send him food and clothing, and they did so with such generosity that in one of his letters he jokingly pretended that he was going to set up a shop in order to sell his superfluities to his fellow-prisoners and make some money. Little incidents betrayed the little irritations of such life, as when he asked his sister to bring him a screw pencil, as he had to request the warder to sharpen his ordinary pencil, when he had written it blunt, and the warder took an irritatingly long time about the task and was ungracious. Yet neither then nor at any other time did Lenin pretend to any personal grievance against his open enemies, the officers of the regime. He was their frank enemy and he held it not at all against them that they treated him as such. He never found it difficult to live on terms of courtesy with them. His abuse he reserved for his comrades.

He was even allowed books in prison—not merely general literature but literature which one would have expected the Russian authorities to condemn as subversive, and much of his correspondence was filled with lists of books which he wanted and discussions on methods of getting them to him. He occupied his enforced leisure in writing his historico-Marxist treatise on the *Development of Capitalism in Russia* and in composing a pamphlet on strikes and a constitution for the Social-Democratic party. The philosophy of Tsarist repression is difficult to comprehend. There is nothing at

<sup>2</sup> Letter 12.

all to choose in violence between the writings that put Lenin into prison and his writings in prison. And why a prisoner should be allowed to send out from prison subversive matter which he was originally put into prison for composing it is hard to see. If the authorities imagined that by allowing Lenin freedom they would learn some secrets about his organization, they must have been naive to expect that he would be thus simply trapped, and certainly they cannot possibly have learnt anything from his severely historical studies. Nor indeed is it probable that they either hoped for, or indeed even needed, such information. All the activities of all the secret societies in Russia always seem to have been perfectly well known to the police. That is why the secret societies almost always failed in their coups; where they succeeded, they succeeded not because they had escaped the notice of the police but because the policemen, whose duty it was to prevent them, were themselves members of the secret society.

Lenin remained in prison throughout 1896, and then in the early months of 1897 he was told that he was to be sent to Siberia to exile. He applied for and received permission to travel at his own expense, and in March he set out on his journey. He was not told his final destination but was ordered to take a ticket for Krasnoyarsk, and thought that he would have to go on from there to Kansk, which was then the terminus of the railway, and from Kansk be sent on a further 700 odd versts or about 450 miles to Irkutsk on horseback, a trip to which he did not greatly look forward in the keen Siberian spring weather. He complained of the slowness of the trains and of the monotony of the scenery, but was spared any serious suffering or, if he met with it, had at least the consideration to conceal it in his letters home in order to spare the feelings of his mother. "Now you can blame me for anything else but not for not writing to you often. When there is something to write about I write twice as often," he pleaded in his own defence in the postscript to a

long letter,<sup>1</sup> "I have been waiting all this time, darling mother, for a letter from you but in vain. . . . Do write oftener . . . for I am depressed without letters from home," he complained<sup>4</sup> some days afterwards in return. His correspondence differed nothing from the correspondence of affectionate sons since time began, and there is something extraordinarily moving, attractive, even heroic in the quiet matter-of-fact way in which Lenin accepted his Siberian exile. It is true that the conditions of his life were not uncomfortable, but exile and loneliness are sufficient to arouse most of us to complaint. Yet there was neither a word of self-pity nor of heroics. He might be a tourist chatting about the scenery. "They," the Moscow papers, "get here after eleven days, and I am not yet used to such late news," was the nearest that he came to complaint at his isolation.<sup>5</sup>

He did not, as it happened, have to go on to Irkutsk. They let him break his journey at Krasnoyarsk and there he was kept throughout the months of March and April. Krasnoyarsk, a city situated at the junction of the Yenisei and Kacha rivers, was a gold-mining centre, a town that in anything like its modern form was the creation of the Trans-Siberian railway. It had about it all the novelty and none of the comforts of an American western town but at least had climatically the advantage of the European Russian cities. Lenin wrote with some curiosity of the strange place whose "inhabitants are for the most part prisoners," but prisoners who were left at complete liberty. To Lenin himself the time there passed not unprofitably. He had met in the train one Krutovsky, a revolutionary, whose acquaintance his sister Anyuta had made in St. Petersburg. Krutovsky gave him a letter of introduction to Udin, a well-known Krasnoyarsk merchant and bibliophile, who had a house two versts outside the town and a fine library, which has since been sold to America and is now the Slavonic Section of the Library of Congress at Washington. It contained

<sup>1</sup> Letter 15.

<sup>4</sup> Letter 17

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*

besides many books a complete set of all important Russian periodicals from the end of the eighteenth century up till the present. Udin greeted Lenin kindly, when he presented his letter, and offered him the run of his library. Lenin was thus able to walk out there every day and to pass his time both pleasantly and profitably, working on his *History of the Development of Capitalism in Russia*. The spring had by then come on, and the weather, he reported, was magnificent. The country, he said, reminded him of Switzerland. The only discomfort to which he confessed was that of anxiety concerning the fate of some of his colleagues, about whom it was difficult to get news.

Then in April he heard that he was not to go to Irkutsk but up the river Yenisei to Minusinsk and then thirty-seven versts further south by horseback to a village of the name of Shushenskoye. "It is a large village with more than 1,500 inhabitants and has a volost administration office and a resident rural assessor . . . a school, etc."<sup>6</sup> He was overjoyed for it was by no means so far as he had feared to be sent, and the climate had the reputation of being a pleasant one. He was right down on the Siberian-Mongolian frontier, and there was around Minusinsk a little pocket of sheltered land of fertile black earth and with an exceptionally equable climate. It was possible to raise a winter wheat-crop. Thither twenty years before Prince Kropotkin had come to his exile and had occupied his leisure in arranging the relics of its old Chinese culture.

Lenin wrote to tell his mother that local gossip called the district "the Siberian Italy"<sup>7</sup> and to invite his brother, Dmitry, who was a doctor, to come out and join him. "I have heard that an emigrant centre is being opened in my village. Why does he not come? We could hunt together. . . . Aha, if in a little over three weeks I can become such a Siberian that I invite you to come from Russia, what will happen in three years' time?"<sup>8</sup> It did not sound like the

<sup>6</sup> Letter 19.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

wail of the dreary exile nor yet of the bitter architect of the coming revolution.

Nor, when he got to Shushenskoye, was Lenin at all disappointed. His mother at once suggested arranging a transfer for him to Tesinskoye, but he discouraged her because the hunting there was not so good. She wrote offering to come and visit him, but he advised against the long journey and was playfully rebuked by his sister for his "terrible inhospitality"<sup>9</sup> in doing so. His consolation was the shooting. "Shooting is apparently not so bad here," he wrote to his mother in the first letter in May. "I rode out twelve versts yesterday and shot duck and snipe. . . . There are even some wild goats and on the hills and in the taiga"—wooded foothills—" (about 30 to 40 versts away, where the local peasants go shooting) there is squirrel, sable, bear and deer."<sup>10</sup> When the summer should come, he hoped to get some bathing in the little river Shush, but not yet, for the snow was still to be seen on the distant Sayan Hills, a picturesque sight but one which warned him that it was folly to be thinking about bathing yet awhile. Beyond the Sayan Hills lay Mongolia and all that was strange.

In the summer his mother instead of coming to visit him went abroad to visit his sister in Berlin. He received a letter from her from Warsaw on her way and wrote back<sup>11</sup> to tell her how glad he was that she was making the trip. She did not need to worry about him, as it would only add two or three days to the long posts which separated them. He had made friends in Minusinsk, who came up to see him, and also Gleb, as he nicknamed G. M. Krzhizhanovsky had got leave to come up from Tesinskoye to spend a few days with him. They would have some hunting and shooting together, so his mother need be under no fear that he would be bored. Meanwhile, as he reported in a later letter,<sup>12</sup> when the summer came, he did get his bathing—twice a day in

<sup>9</sup> Letter 20.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Letter 21.

<sup>12</sup> Letter 22.

the Yenisei—and enjoyed it very much. It was a pleasant refreshment after shooting.

Then Gleb came for his visit, and in September Lenin returned the visit, going down to their house at Tesinskoye. He reported on the *ménage* of Starkov, whom he called Basil, Gleb and his mother. They “are very comfortably settled.” “They live in a splendid flat in a large two-storied house (in Shusha there isn’t even such a house) the best in the village. They have the entire top floor, four large rooms with a kitchen and a hall into the bargain . . . six roubles a month.” The only trouble was the perennial one of servants. “E. E.”—that is, Gleb’s mother—“feels well, surrounded by her family and busy with the household, although in the summer it was rather hard for her. . . . She has to do all the work herself. There are no servants to be found here and in the summer it is quite impossible to find anyone. Now a woman comes to help them.” “People also think I have grown fat here,” he added in a postscript, “I am sunburnt and look quite a Siberian. See what shooting and village life can do. All Petersburg illnesses vanish at once.”<sup>13</sup>

By October he was back in Shushenskoye and was writing to report upon the autumn shooting.<sup>14</sup> “The sport is much less successful now (shooting rabbits, grouse and partridge is a new sport for me and I must therefore get used to it) but it is no less pleasant.” He usually went out with Prominsky, a fellow exile, a Pole, who had been sent to Siberia because of his participation in the organization of the Polish social-democrats at Lodz. He was very glad, he confessed in retrospect, to have paid his visit to Tesinskoye and to have met many friends there but he would not care to live there. He likes a lot of company from time to time and for a change but for his regular life prefers quiet. In the same way he liked every now and again to pay a visit to Minusinsk but would not care to live there. He noticed that the exiles who lived in colonies got on one another’s nerves. Besides

<sup>13</sup> Letter 24.

<sup>14</sup> Letter 25.

there were compensations in living in lodgings; one was freed from the eternal worry of the servant problem. "To live, as I do, on full board is quite convenient."

In the winter Gleb came back to him for another visit of some ten days around Christmas time. They "did a great deal of walking." The climate was lovely—a great contrast to his native Simbirsk. "Fortunately for the most part the weather is very warm . . . and we go out shooting assiduously, although with not much luck."<sup>15</sup> To his sister he wrote<sup>16</sup> about the details of the journey for the visit that she was to pay to him and warning her that Nadezhda Konstantinova—Mlle. Krupskaya, the lady who was to become his wife—might be coming, too. To his brother he wrote,<sup>17</sup> saying that he was coming to think more highly of a proposal which he had made to send him a present of a dog from St. Petersburg. Pegasus, his Siberian dog, "has betrayed me so cruelly"—had proved incompetent, that is to say, for sporting purposes. But there would obviously be great practical difficulties and expense in sending a dog across a continent, and it was doubtful if it would really be worth while.

They make strange and very pleasant reading—these letters of Lenin from Siberia to his family. With the exclusion of but a few sentences they might be the letters of a delightful but indolent country squire of outdoor tastes but of a gentle epicurean philosophy which forbade him even to take such tastes too seriously—one whom wisdom had taught to turn his back upon the press of men, and on the folly of affairs. Nor is there any reason to think that Lenin did not genuinely enjoy this quiet life, just as he was quite certainly genuinely devoted to his family. Yet at the same time the letters were to some extent a ruse—to allay the suspicions of the authorities if they should chance to fall into their hands. For at the same time he was also carrying on another correspondence of a very different sort. Letters were going out to Axelrod in Zurich. These letters usually went out concealed

<sup>15</sup> Letter 26<sup>16</sup> Letter 28<sup>17</sup> Letter 26.



in the bindings of books. They went by a regular underground railway through the hands of two or three agents until eventually they reached his sister, Elizarova, in Berlin. By her they were copied out and forwarded on to Axelrod. There were other letters passing out in similar secret ways to other revolutionaries. In June of this year, 1897, the industrial strikers had won a partial victory by wresting from the Government legislation to limit their hours of work to 11½ a day, and the Marxians were determined to take advantage of this first concession in order to appear before the workers as their true friends and to push them into yet further disruptive action. Unity was the first necessity, and at their Zurich Summer Conference all the groups of the Social-Democratic party were re-united into one party. Then after union, action. The time had now come to extend themselves beyond the capitals and in the autumn of that year branches for the liberation of the working classes were formed in Kiev, Ekaterinoslav, Nikolaev and elsewhere—Unions of Struggle for the Liberation of the Working Class they were called—Kiev, because of the large Jewish proletariat population, engaged in the sugar refineries there—Ekaterinoslav, because it was a mining town where industry was financed almost entirely by French and Belgian capital—Nikolaev, because, a Black Sea port, it had in addition to an industrial proletariat a large, floating population, dependent on casual dock-labour and ready to give an ear to revolutionary suggestion.

At the same time a new policy was adopted and developed—that of appealing to the racial grievances of the non-Russian bodies throughout the Empire. The record of the Russian Government was such that it was not difficult to obtain considerable support for any revolutionary movement among the Jews, who did, as a matter of fact, as is well known, come to contribute far more than their fair share to the leadership of the revolution. At the same time attempts were made to capture the other non-Russian nationalities—

Letts, Poles, Finns, Georgians, Armenians—with varying success.

To all these activities Lenin lent the assistance of which he was capable—that of his pen. He wrote articles for the *Novoye Slovo*, or *New World*, a journal which had been the property of the right Narodniki but which in April 1897, was acquired by the legal Marxists, of which Struve was the editor, until it was banned in December of that year. The main concern of his writings at this time was to prevent his fellow-revolutionaries from spoiling their opportunity by compromising the pure Marxian gospel in order to obtain an alliance with the Narodniki, or peasant socialists. His formula for the moment was one of wide comprehensiveness in order to include all who accepted the Marxian analysis and to make sure that there were no merely personal or incidental quarrels, but at the same time pitiless exposure of those who posed as friends of the workers without accepting Marx. He also translated the Webbs' *Theory and Practice of Trades Unions*. The purpose of this was to show to the Russian workers that in England, too, there had been a time when workers' organizations had been proscribed but that there the workers had by their persistence at last won the right to organize and had benefited greatly from it. Lenin's advocacy of the Webbs to the Russian workers was not, it need hardly be said, single-minded. For, while he wished to win the Russian workers to unionism, he had no mind that those unions, when achieved and built strong, should be used for the winning of merely industrial victories of wages and hours. They were of course, unlike the English unions, to be used for general revolutionary purposes.

Towards the end of the year, in November, Lenin's younger brother, Dmitry, got himself arrested. He was a medical student at Moscow University and had been mixed up in the formation of the Union of Struggle there. "The matter," as Lenin put it,<sup>18</sup> "was not important." However they kept

<sup>18</sup> Letter 27.

him in prison for a year and then exiled him to Tula, an unhealthy town to the south of Moscow, the seat of armaments manufacture. After a month there he was brought back and kept under police surveillance for a year in Podolsk, just outside Moscow before being allowed to complete his studies at Yuriev University in what is now Esthonia. His adventures are mainly of interest to-day because of the very shrewd and humorous advice on how to keep fit in prison, which they called forth from Lenin.

"It is a bad thing that after only two and a half months Mitya should be showing signs of swelling. First of all, is he keeping to a diet in prison? I am sure he is not. But in my opinion it is essential to keep to one there. And secondly does he do any physical exercises? Also, probably not. They are also essential. At any rate I can say from experience that *each day* I used to do exercises before going to sleep with great pleasure and benefit. They loosened my joints so that I used to get warm even on the coldest days, when my cell was icy cold, and afterwards one sleeps much better. I can recommend this to him as well as a fairly easy exercise (though a ridiculous one)—fifty prostrations. It is exactly what I used to make myself do—and I was not in the least perturbed that the warder, on peeping through the little window, would wonder in amazement why this man had suddenly grown so pious when he had not once asked to visit the prison church. But he must not do less than fifty prostrations, without stopping, and touch the floor each time without bending the knees—write and tell him this."<sup>10</sup>

But the activities of the Russian police had in these days brought another interest into Lenin's life. As has been said, in his days of freedom in St. Petersburg he had made the acquaintance of a young woman revolutionary, Krupskaya. (Women were always prominent in Russian revolutionary circles, because the Tsarist system, while being fairly generous in its offer of opportunities to women to acquire education,

<sup>10</sup> Letter 20.

gave them afterwards no opening at all for making a careerist use of those opportunities. It was therefore not difficult for educated women who had been disappointed in matrimony to be driven by the Cameelious Hump into revolution. Krupskaya's die was already cast before Lenin met her.) Krupskaya had not been arrested at the same time as Lenin and Krzhizhanovsky, but Lenin was anxious lest she might be put to the same fate as he, as is proved by a letter that he wrote from his prison in St. Petersburg to Chebotareva,<sup>20</sup> a friend of his family, with whom he used to board. In it he inquired for news of "the Mynoga"—his nickname for Krupskaya. However on 9-21 August 1896, while Lenin was still in St. Petersburg, she, along with some other of Lenin's companions, was arrested, and by the time that Lenin had to leave St. Petersburg her fate had not yet been decided. He wrote to his sister, Anyuta, in some anxiety during his month's stay at Krasnoyarsk to ask for news of her. Eventually the sentence passed on her was that of three years' exile to the Northern Provinces. However to the Tsarist authorities, who seem to have been quite extraordinarily casual and good-natured, one punishment was much the same as another, and they agreed without difficulty that she should be allowed to go to Southern Siberia and join Lenin at Shushenskoye instead of to the North. They did, it is true, jib at her request for a reduction of her sentence from three years to two on the ground that she was going to marry Lenin and that it would be highly inconvenient to both of them, should her sentence overlap that of her husband.

Anyway they decided to get married, and Lenin wrote off to his family to inform them of the happy news. He was delighted at their generous replies and at his mother's ready welcome to her future daughter-in-law. "Yesterday, darling mother, I received letters from you and from all our people; I was very glad to get them and send my thanks for all the

good wishes. Of course I expected that you would write to Nadezhda Konstantinova to ask her to come and see you on her way." He rebuked the excitement of his sister who was pushing things too fast. "Anyuta asks when is the wedding and whom we are inviting. She is in a hurry. Nadezhda Konstantinova must first arrive, then we must get a permit for the marriage from the authorities—after all we are people wholly without rights. And only then can we start inviting."<sup>21</sup>

But he was nevertheless making plans, if not about the wedding, at least about their future life. "I am expecting her," he wrote,<sup>22</sup> "together with Elizaveta Vasilievna"—her mother. "I am already looking for quarters for them—the room next to mine. I am having an amusing competition with a local priest who is also asking the landlord for a room. I protest and insist that they should wait until my family affairs are finally settled. I do not know whether I shall succeed in overcoming the competitor. If visitors come in the summer we shall be able to occupy the entire house. The landlord would then move into the old hut in the yard and that would be much more convenient than equipping one's own house."

So he spun out the time as best he could throughout the spring months, writing home for books and ever more books, and sealing-wax, and a pen-wiper (to cure him of the habit which he had formed of wiping his pen on the lapel of his jacket) and a pair of scissors (to save him from having to borrow his landlord's sheep-shears). But above all, to kill the time and until his lady came, he must have a set of chess-men. He had played years before, and suddenly the memory of the game swept over him with a nostalgic rush. He knew that there were several spare sets at home. Could he not have one? So he took up the game again, and kept it up for many years until compelled to abandon it because the excitement kept him awake at night.

<sup>21</sup> Letter 20.

<sup>22</sup> Letter 28.

Then at the beginning of May she at last arrived. "They arrived," he wrote,<sup>23</sup> "on the 7th of May in the evening, and of course it was the very day I had cleverly gone out shooting, so they did not find me at home. I found Nadezhda Konstantinova looking not at all well, she will have to look after her health a little better here. But about me Elizaveta Vasilievna said 'Gracious, how you have spread.' So you see, you do not need a better report." They had been held up at a place called Sorokin, the other side of Minusinsk, because the water was too low for the steamer. They had to push forward the wedding in a hurry, because the authorities only allowed Krupskaya to come to Lenin on condition that they got married immediately. If they were not married, she must go to Ufa whither she had been originally assigned. He was anxious to get the necessary papers through before the mid-summer feast of St. Peter, when for a season marriages cannot be solemnized in the Orthodox Church. That, as it turned out, proved impossible, but the authorities were not pedantic in their interpretation of the word "immediately" and were satisfied with the marriage of 10-22 July. "Of course Anyuta asks me whom I am inviting to the wedding," wrote Lenin to his family. "I invite you all," and to his mother he added a special invitation. "I would very, very much like you to try to come here."

As a matter of fact none of his relations was able to make the long journey, and indeed the wedding was a quieter affair than Lenin had intended. For a friend of his, Raichin, had a month or two before got leave to go away from Minusinsk and had then escaped and got clear out of the country. As a consequence the authorities refused to allow Gleb and his other friends leave to come up from Tesinskoye for the celebration. Lenin was sorry for that, because Gleb could always add to the gaiety of an occasion by his singing. "What kind of a voice has Gleb?" asked Lenin's sister, Manyasha. "Hm, hm," he answered. "I believe, a baritone

<sup>23</sup> Letter 22.

—I am not certain. But he sings the same things Mark and we used to 'screech' (as Nurse used to call it)."<sup>24</sup>

The rest of the year seemed to be busy but not deeply eventful for Lenin. By the middle of August he had finished his translation of the Webbs' book and posted it off to the publisher. "Those stupid apologists of English philistinism," he called them.<sup>25</sup> In November he made an excuse of a visit to the dentist for a trip down to Krasnoyarsk and was glad of the little change. Exile, even when combined with matrimony, was clearly beginning to tell on him. His sister Manyasha, had gone to Brussels, and he wrote to her,<sup>26</sup> "We immediately took out our maps and began to hunt for Brussels. We found it and began thinking how close it was to London, that Paris was near and also Germany—one would call it the centre of Europe. Yes, I envy you. At the beginning of my exile I decided never to touch a map either of European Russia or even of Europe; it would mean too much bitterness as I looked at those various black spots. But it is not so bad now; I have grown patient and can examine maps more calmly. Sometimes we even dream into which of the spots it would be interesting to land later on. During the first half of my exile I must have been constantly looking back, now I look forward. Ah, well, *qui vivra verra*."

Meanwhile there had been a development in Russian revolutionary politics, which had aroused Lenin's anxiety. After the formation of the successful Unions of Struggle in Kiev, Ekaterinoslav and Nikolaev the Social-Democratic party held its first party congress at Minsk at the beginning of 1898. Struve composed its manifesto. Resolutions concerning the organization of the unions and the launching of a newspaper were passed, and the Congress elected a central committee. The Government struck back and arrested most of the party leaders.

Their revolt led some of those who remained at liberty to

<sup>24</sup> Letter 29.

<sup>25</sup> Letter 37.

<sup>26</sup> *Works*, "Against the Boycott," vol. III, p. 416.

advocate, as their only chance of preserving that liberty, the new policy of economism. The advocates of economism, of whom Mme. Kuskowa was the leader and who derived from the conception of Marxism of the German Jew, Edward Bernstein, argued that the parties of the liberal and bourgeois intelligentsia should be left to fight out their battles for parliamentary government. It was the economist's task meanwhile to concentrate upon the fighting by means of the trades unions of the purely industrial battles of wages and hours. It was Bernstein's contention that Marx had been mistaken in expecting the small business man to be squeezed out and society to be entirely divided into large capitalists and proletarians. On the contrary the strength of the middle-class had increased. It was a class that was fanatically opposed to revolution, and any tactics which did not take account of its existence and ambitions were foredoomed to failure. This policy was of course the exact opposite to that which Lenin advocated, by which industrial grievances should be exploited for political ends. There was not much that he could do from exile, but he and seventeen other exiles of his neighbourhood got together and signed a declaration which Lenin had composed against economism.

In April 1899, his great historical work on the *Development of Capitalism in Russia* was published. He had begun it when in prison and continued it during his years of exile. The book is a vigorous attack both on the Narodniki and the legal Marxists. He argued against the Narodniki that it is a romantic folly of theirs to imagine that they can build in Russia a distributist peasant state, which would escape the evils of capitalism. He gave his statistics to show that even agriculture had already become capitalist. At the same time he argued against the legal Marxists that the capitalist system was inevitably destined to collapse.

In December there was extensive labour trouble in Russia—a general strike of the workers in the Ivano-Voznesensk cotton and linen factories. The strike only sharpened the



issue between the rival theorists, and throughout 1899 the struggle between the two creeds continued in newspaper warfare. The legal Marxists had two papers, *Zhizn*, or *Life*, and *Nachalo*, or the *Beginning*, which was banned in June 1899. The economists had the *Rabocheye Delo*, or *Workers' Cause*, which was published abroad. Lenin contributed both to the two Marxian and to other journals. Either the prospect of coming liberty and a return to the fray or else a disinterested fear of the selling of the pass or the mere nervous irksomeness of the years of monotony had by now shaken him out of the easy content of a country gentleman's life, and the year was for him a much more vigorous and bellicose one than those that had preceded it. He went down to Gleb's for a few days with his wife to see the New Year in, and wrote to his mother, "There was a number of toasts when the New Year came in and one comrade's toast to Elvina Ernestnovna and to absent mothers was particularly warmly received."<sup>27</sup> However, returning to Shushenskoye, he at once plunged into bitter controversy. A letter to his old St. Petersburg friend, Potresov, gave him an excuse to let off steam about the necessary revolutionary tactics.

"There were," he agreed with Axelrod<sup>28</sup> "two submerged rocks" which must be avoided, if the revolutionary schemes were not to suffer shipwreck. On the one hand it must not be sidetracked into a dissipation of its energies in purely particular battles between the workers and individual employers on merely industrial issues. On the other hand, while ready to fight for the Revolution when the time came, it must not out of impatience give its support to revolutions of the wrong sort—for instance, to an anarchist revolution under the leadership of the followers of Bakunin. Yet he quarrelled with Axelrod, too, for being too polite to liberals and agrarians—it was difficult not to be what Lenin called "too polite" to liberals. And in a passage of some interest

<sup>27</sup> Letter 39.

<sup>28</sup> Letter 41.

he defined what ought to be, and what has been for nearly forty years, the attitude of communists towards all the tag, tag and bobtail of muddled liberalism. Where it is strong, coherent and has intelligent leadership, then it must be fought. Where it is merely contemptible, then an alliance can be formed with it and it can be used. "Extricate whatever is progressive," he wrote, "from the junk of Narodnichestvo and agrarianism and utilize it in such a cleansed condition. In my opinion 'utilize' is much more accurate and suitable than support and union. The latter points to the equal rights of these united comrades, whereas they should (and in this I quite agree with you) bring up the rear, sometimes even with a 'grinding of teeth'; they have definitely not grown yet to the stature of equality and will never do so with their cowardice, disunion, etc." Axelrod had pleaded that it was a mistake to take up a disdainful attitude towards the liberals. "That is quite right," mordantly commented Lenin. "They should in no way be disdained; they should be used."

His particular quarrels during these months were with Tugan-Baranovsky, Bulgakov and Bernstein. Tugan-Baranovsky was a student for whose research work in English conditions Lenin had before that expressed some esteem. However he fell from grace because of an article which he published in the *Nauchnoye Obozreniye* on the *Fundamental Mistake in Marx's Abstract Theory of Capitalism*. According to Tugan-Baranovsky there could be a change in the productivity of labour without a change in the cost of the product, and this proved that it was an over-simplification to say with Marx that the real cost of an article was the cost of the labour put into it. The criticism, said Lenin, was "monstrously stupid and absurd. . . . I do not know whether it is worth while replying to these rubbishy little articles."<sup>22</sup> So to his sister. And to Potresov. "The devil only knows what such stupid and pretentious rubbish means. Without

<sup>22</sup> Letter 49.

any historical study of Marx's doctrine . . . an absurdity. . . . Mikhailovsky was right when he called him the echo of a man."<sup>30</sup>

Bulgakov's fault was an even more serious one, to Lenin's eyes, than that of misunderstanding Marx. In the early period of his exile he had been quite tolerant of Bulgakov's work, "Bulgakov's little book is not bad," he wrote<sup>31</sup> to his mother on 14-26 February 1898, of his *Markets under Capitalist Production*, "but I do not like the chapter on circulation and his formulation of the question of the foreign market is not quite accurate." But, when Bulgakov followed that work up with his *Capitalism in Agriculture*, in which he explicitly quarrelled with the Marxian theory of the necessity of a socialist revolution, Lenin's temper was a very different one. "The Bulgakov article is revolting," he wrote.<sup>32</sup> "He is simply distorting Kautsky, and then too that attack against Zusammenbruch—an echo of Bernstein's criticism. . . . I am writing a second article against him." The truth, the terrible truth, about Bulgakov was that he was what Lenin called "a Kantian"—that is to say, that he was not an economic determinist at all. He argued that there were certain social factors which were not patent of merely economic explanation. What a heresy! And, as the years rolled by, it was to be found that there was an unguessed-at depth of baseness in Bulgakov's character. Not content with being a Kantian, he even went off and became a Christian and finished up his days as a priest of the Orthodox Church.

But the real villain of the piece, the real inspirer of the treason of economism was the German Jew, Bernstein. Plekhanov, wrote Lenin<sup>33</sup> to his brother, Mitya, "is perfectly right in pronouncing neo-Kantianism to be a reactionary theory of the reactionary bourgeoisie and in revolting against Bernstein." "I quite agree that a serious war with them (especially about Bernstein) is essential," he told Plekhanov.

<sup>30</sup> Letter 50.

<sup>31</sup> Letter 30.

<sup>32</sup> Letter 46.

<sup>33</sup> Letter 49.

Not until September 1899, some months after he had denounced it, was Lenin able to get hold of Bernstein's book, *Die Voraussetzungen des Socialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie*. He and his wife then set down to read it, "Its contents," he reported to his mother,<sup>51</sup> "astound us more and more. Theoretically it is incredibly weak. . . . Practically it is opportunism (or rather Fabianism; the original source of a number of Bernstein's contentions and ideas is in the latest books written by the Webbs)." In Lenin's vocabulary there could be no abuse more bitter than that. "It is indifferent opportunism and possibilism and cowardly opportunism at that."

What was the reason why things were going so very wrong? The reason, Lenin concluded, was that he and his friends were in exile in Siberia and Plekhanov and Axelrod in exile in Switzerland. Meanwhile the leadership of the revolutionary forces had passed into the hands of Struve, and Struve was not equal to his responsibilities. Lenin had never, it will be remembered, placed great confidence in him, but there had been a time when he had been willing to defend him against the major accusations. "I believe you are cross with the Writer"—as he called Struve—he had written<sup>52</sup> in April 1897, "but when you write to him on my behalf do not show him this—I have absolutely no rancour against him for the loss of my literature. After all he had nothing to do with it." But by 1899 his tone began to change. At first there was nothing personal to the disagreement. "I am now finishing a short article," he wrote<sup>53</sup> in March 1899, "in answer to one by Struve; in my opinion he has thoroughly muddled matters and by this article may cause some misunderstanding among supporters, also malicious satisfaction among antagonists." But by June the tone had already grown sharper. Plekhanov had written to him to report a reaction against Marxism among the revolutionaries of St. Petersburg. "Perhaps it is Struve and Co.

<sup>51</sup> Letter 59.

<sup>52</sup> Letter 19.

<sup>53</sup> Letter 43.

who are developing the tendency of uniting with the Liberals?" he answered.<sup>57</sup> "... If Struve 'completely ceases being a comrade'—then it will be all the worse for him. Of course it would be a great loss for all comrades, for he is a very talented and well-informed man, but obviously 'friendship is friendship and work is work' and on this account the necessity for war will not disappear. . . . For this we need a third type of literature—illegal and orthodox literature—and a platform (if I have understood you correctly). It will be then only that the real comrades will be differentiated from the 'camp-followers' and then only will no personal caprices and struggling theoretical discoveries cause confusion and anarchy." And by September even the pretence at reluctance for the quarrel had vanished. "The Writer's silence," he wrote,<sup>58</sup> "disgusts me. They have not sent Webb. They have not printed my article about the markets and there is not a sound about the article against Bulgakov. Not a sound. I think all the manuscripts ought to be taken away from him. . . . If he has kept back my article against him simply because he has not yet finished his reply to it—then that is absolutely disgusting. There is no point in writing to him—he does not reply."

In February of 1900 Plekhanov issued his reply to the economists in his *Vade-Mecum*, and the Liberation of Labour group declared overt war on what they called the anti-revolutionary group. The majority of the Union of Social-Democrats was however on the side of the economists, thinking of their programme as sane and practical and that of the Marxians as wildly Utopian and, judging from past experience, unlikely to meet with success. As a result, in March the Liberation of Labour group definitely seceded from the Social-Democratic Union and founded a party of their own, called the Revolutionary Social-Democrats. Even the revolutionary social-democrats were by no means as revolutionary as Lenin would have liked and included in

<sup>57</sup> Letter 50.

<sup>58</sup> Letter 52.

the minority to which Lenin had to attach himself were such men as Struve and Tugan-Baranovsky, of whose principles he was, as we have seen, more than suspicious. The truth was that during the years of Lenin's exile opinion had moved strongly to the Right, and there seemed no reason why the revolutionary movement should not altogether die down.

Meanwhile in this same February Lenin's own period of exile had expired. He had had a half-fear at one time that he would be given a further term but this fear was not realized. The only qualification to his comfort was that it was not found possible to get Krupskaya's sentence reduced from three years to two, and therefore, while he returned to Europe, she was condemned to spend another year at Ufa up in the Urals. Lenin himself went to live at Pskov, an ancient but decayed city, to the south of St. Petersburg, on what is now the Russo-Esthonian border. He was worried about his wife, for the doctors' reports on her were not favourable and, like St. Paul with his Roman citizenship, Lenin was not above presenting<sup>\*\*</sup> a petition in the name of "the hereditary noble, Vladimir Ilich Ulianov," begging for leave to visit her for six weeks at Ufa. The request was at first, somewhat to his surprise, refused. However his mother succeeded in getting police permission in St. Petersburg, and he, she and his sister, Anyuta, went out to Ufa for a month in the summer of 1900.

An attempt had been made by the Liberation of Labour group to carry on with their newspaper, the *Workers' News*, under the editorship of Lenin's friend, Potresov, and Martov, another friend, whom Lenin knew as Julius and who had, like him, just returned from a Siberian exile. Yet what between the police and lack of finances the venture was voted an impossible one. The temptation to allow one's opinions to slip towards the Right in order to avoid the intolerable pressure of continual persecution was almost irresistible in

<sup>\*\*</sup> Letter 58.

the Russia of that day, and it was felt that there was a limit to what even the most heroic souls could stand and that the only result of a further overt challenge to authority would be still further to diminish their already diminished numbers. It was decided therefore that instead Lenin and Potresov should go abroad and should produce a Russian paper there in co-operation with Plekhanov and the Liberation of Labour group. Ways could be found, it was felt, for smuggling the paper back into the country.

Lenin had petitioned to be allowed to go to St. Petersburg. That petition had been refused, and he had been sent to Pskov instead. His leadership among the extreme revolutionaries was now so outstanding that rather than do without his advice they decided to come to Pskov and hold their conference there. At the Pskov Conference Lenin had beside him his two friends, Martov and Potresov. Of those whom he had been recently criticizing Struve and Tugan-Baranovsky were present, and a veteran revolutionary, Radchenko, who had not been involved in the controversies, was present to help make the peace. Things were patched over for the moment and all co-operated in the formation of the plans for the illegal publications abroad. After the conference Lenin went, in defiance of a police veto, on visits to Moscow, St. Petersburg and Nijni-Novgorod, in order to get in touch with the revolutionary social-democrats there and to assure himself of their co-operation. At St. Petersburg he was detected and arrested and had to spend three weeks of May in prison. After his release from prison he made his visit to his wife at Ufa and seems to have combined the visiting of the sick with some revolutionary propaganda there. Then by the middle of July he was back in Europe at Podolsk, outside Moscow, for a very brief farewell visit to his mother, and a few days later left the country, crossing the frontier into Germany.

## CHAPTER III

### ISKRA

**L**ENIN went first, it seems, to Paris, for in a letter<sup>1</sup> to his mother, written on 18-31 August he mentioned having written to her twice from Paris. That letter however, the first which we have from him on this trip, was from Nuremberg, and it was in Germany that his first months were spent.

His first task was to get into touch with Adolf Braum, the German social-democrat, and to obtain his advice how best trouble might be avoided in the printing of such a paper in Germany. Meanwhile, as always after a political party has been split, there were the pacifiers who were for making large concessions in order to heal the breach. Lenin had to maintain a vigorous rearguard action against such compromisers. We have a letter of his<sup>2</sup> to an unknown correspondent, who had written, as some people always do write under such circumstances, that there was room for compromise with the majority social-democrats and that the economists did not really mean what they seemed to mean. It was vital, the correspondent had pleaded, that we preserve "certain connections" with them. "We shall have *certain* connections with the Union, such as exist between enemies," grimly replied Lenin.

He wrote<sup>3</sup> to his wife from Munich in September of this same year, to tell her how in the Congress of Russian Social-Democrats Abroad in the April of that year it had come to a physical fight. Contrary to the general rule that it is the young who are attracted to revolutionary movements, it was now the young who were for compromise—for what

<sup>1</sup> Letter 62.

<sup>2</sup> Letter 63.

<sup>3</sup> Letter 64.



Lenin called "eclecticism and fragmentarianism"—and the older men who stuck to the ancient principles and with whom Lenin, though he was himself but thirty, took his stand. "*Laissez-faire, laissez-passer*, with regard to economism—those are the tactics of a conciliatory attitude towards it, tactics of covering the extremes of economism, tactics of protecting economism from a direct struggle against it, tactics of free criticism, i.e. free criticism of Marxism on the part of all sorts of direct and disguised ideologues of the bourgeoisie"—this, he thought, was the programme. Against it the Faithful must stand unflinching in their opposition to all freedom, whether of action or of mind, in their insistence on "an irrevocable breach with bourgeois criticism." He was writing at the same time letters in similar strain to other revolutionary correspondents. "Unity," he wrote to his critic, A. A. Yakubova,<sup>4</sup> a female revolutionary, then in London, "when we hide economic documents from comrades as though they were a secret disease, when we take offence because of the publication of views propagated under the flag of social-democracy, such unity is not worth a brass farthing. Such unity is pure cant." His principle was unwavering. We must co-operate with those whom we can use. Where we cannot use, we destroy.

Meanwhile there was another controversy—of a purely practical sort—to be settled. Would it be better to publish the paper that they were planning in Switzerland or in Germany? At first Plekhanov and Axelrod were for Switzerland and Lenin for Germany. But, after a meeting between them all at Geneva in September 1900, Lenin was able to win them all over to a preference for printing in Leipzig and publishing in Munich. Lenin settled down in Munich to edit the paper, and Krupskaya soon afterwards joined him there on her release from Ufa. Potresov and Martov made Munich the base for their periodical journeys into Russia, and Vera Zasulich from the Swiss group moved

<sup>4</sup> Letter 67.

over to join Lenin and his wife so as to make certain that the point of view of the Liberation of Labour group was adequately represented. Lenin had also by now obtained the collaboration of a number of Parisian exiles, of whom the most distinguished was that gentleman who with the happy Bolshevik indifference to a name pops up in revolutionary literature indifferently as Gurevich, Danevich or Smirnov.

It was in December of 1900 that the first number of the paper appeared. It was called, *Iskra*, the *Spark*, because, as its motto explained, "From the Spark will come the Flame." Even then however its life was not a smooth one, for the first batch of copies, which it was attempted to smuggle into Russia, was seized near Memel and confiscated. Much of Lenin's correspondence throughout this year was occupied with the attempt to persuade sympathizers to go and live on the Russo-German frontier on one excuse or another, so that they might be able to smuggle his paper for him into Russia.

For the moment he had another controversy on hand. It will be remembered that even in the minority Revolutionary Social-Democratic party Lenin had to accept the collaboration of men of whose principles he was thoroughly suspicious—in particular of Struve. It had been agreed that, in addition to *Iskra*, there should also be published another paper, *Zarya*, the *Dawn*, devoted to the working out of technical problems. At a meeting with the *Iskra* group in Munich in December 1900, Struve had suggested that there should be added to these two papers a third, called the *Sovremennoye Obozreniye*, or a *Contemporary Survey*, and that any matter sent into the *Sovremennoye Obozreniye* would only be used in *Iskra* with the consent of a representative of the former. This seemed a fair enough proposition, and the other members of the *Iskra* board had all accepted. Lenin, however, whose suspicions of a man when once aroused never abated, was convinced that this was but an elaborate plan by which Struve would be able continually to prevent the insertion

into *Iskra* of interesting matter, and thus to ruin it. That Struve had any direct and conscious intention of doing this is improbable, but his subsequent acceptance of the monarchy showed that the attempt to make his mind march along with that of Lenin was an attempt foredoomed to failure, and, if one accepts loyalty to the Revolution as the great virtue, then, even if Lenin was not at the moment justified in the nickname of Judas by which he now habitually referred to Struve, still the name was at least justified in prophetic prevision. On the other hand there was some force in Struve's ripost that it was the incurable mutual abusiveness and suspicions of the revolutionaries which eventually caused him to despair of revolution and to think that there was no refuge save in a conservative programme.

As it happened the arrangement for co-operation fell through. Struve hung around in Munich for a couple of months, clearly getting more and more on Lenin's nerves. "Judas has not left yet," wrote<sup>5</sup> Lenin to Axelrod on 14-27 February 1901. "Thank goodness, he is clearing off at last one day soon." Soon after he had left there came in a letter from a friend of his, enclosing two hundred roubles, and saying, "I am sending 200 roubles for the *Sovremennoye Obozreniye* and please bear in mind that it is *not* for you but for this publication." "Now is it not true that we have again been duped?" exclaimed<sup>6</sup> Lenin to Axelrod with some satisfaction. On the excuse of this insult Lenin was able to persuade his colleagues to abandon all plans for co-operation with Struve and, when the second number of *Zarya* did appear in the middle of the year, it contained an article against Struve from the pen of Plekhanov, who had previously been the champion of co-operation with him.

The editorial board had another worry during these months, with the German printer Dietz—"that daft idiot, Dietz"—Lenin called him<sup>7</sup>—who, not unreasonably, took it into his head that, if he were not careful, he would be getting

<sup>5</sup> Letter 76.

<sup>6</sup> Letter 78.

<sup>7</sup> Letter 76.

himself into trouble. He refused to set up a certain article by Axelrod, and in the end Lenin was compelled to transfer the work to another printer in Geneva.

Then there was the question, after the first fiasco, of getting the paper into Russia, and that without spending too much money about it. For at the time they were all very hard up. There was a route from Scandinavia into Finland, in the use of which they received the assistance of the Norwegian Social-Democrat Garder and the then young and ardent, subsequently distinguished and respectable Swedish socialist, Branting, the only social-democrat in the Swedish Parliament. However in 1900 Garder had been arrested and that road was now difficult. Then what Lenin called the Zurich-Letts—the people who had been caught with No. 1 of *Iskra*—so far from being penitent, wrote instead asking for more money next time and attributing their previous failure to lack of cash.

Again further troubles. His Parisian supporters threatened to desert him for the *Rabocheye Delo*, or *Workers' Cause*, the journal of the hated economists, where, as Lenin did not hesitate to suggest, they had their eyes "on a better little job."<sup>8</sup> Then, after it had all been settled that such a paper as *Iskra* could only be produced abroad, to Lenin's intense annoyance and impatience, some of their Moscow supporters tried to re-open the whole question and suggested a Russian publication instead. And finally one of the leading supporters in Kiev, L. I. Goldman, deserted him and accepted the contract for printing the economist paper *Vpered*, or *Forward*.

Meanwhile in June of this year a conference had met at Geneva to draw up a draft formula on the basis of which it was hoped that it might be possible to effect a reconciliation between the two wings of the Social-Democratic party. The final conference met at Zurich in October, and, largely owing to Lenin's vigorous stand, no agreement was reached. The breach was not healed.

<sup>8</sup> Letter 80.

Lenin was now not merely a revolutionary, but a revolutionary against the revolutionaries. He was in revolt against his comrades every bit as much as against the authorities. As we read the story from Lenin's side, we read of a tedious record of bungling, treachery and baseness of such a sort that we cannot but wonder why it did not sometimes occur to Lenin, as it occurred to Struve, to say, "If that is what revolutionaries are like, let us at all costs avoid a revolution." But, although Lenin in his subsequent career was going so greatly to overshadow those with whom he was in controversy, we must not therefore make the error of looking at the controversies only from Lenin's side. It is necessary to understand what others thought, and in the eyes of the ordinary Russian revolutionary of this date Lenin was little better than mad. There seemed not the least prospect that the extreme policy which he was advocating would meet with success. Talk of the Spark that would light the Flame seemed like empty rhetorical bombast, and in the meanwhile by his unflinching opposition to any policy of practical amelioration he was condemning the proletariat to quite unnecessary suffering. His habit of ascribing the basest motives to any who differed from him made negotiation with him intolerable, as also did his arrogation to himself of the sole right to interpret the Marxian gospel. In brief, he was impossible. He had been, they told one another, a decent and friendly sort of fellow before his Siberian exile, but the nervous strain of that exile or the gathering power of disease had been too much for him. Fortunately for the cause his influence was small, and the sooner that men ceased to hear of him the better. Were they wholly wrong? Did Lenin tower above them as a giant of Brobdingnag in the gardens of Lilliput? or did chance play its part in bringing him to the empire of the Tsars and his rivals to oblivion and destruction?

Yet, inhuman towards others, he remained always human towards his family. And it was a time of some anxiety for the Ulianov family. There had been disturbances in Russia

that spring, about which owing to the censorship it was difficult for the exiles to get the truth. "The devil knows what is happening in Russia," he wrote to Axelrod,<sup>9</sup> "demonstrations in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kharkov, Kazan; martial law in Moscow (they have arrested my youngest sister (Manyasha) among others and even my brother-in-law (Mark) who has never taken part in anything); bloodshed; the prisons are overcrowded, etc., etc." Mark's case was, it seems, not serious, but Manyasha was kept in prison for some time and in solitary confinement. Lenin wrote to her a shrewdly practical letter similar to that which he had written to Dmitri, when he was in prison.<sup>10</sup>

"And how are you? I hope you have settled down to a more regular regime, which is so important when one is in solitary confinement. I immediately wrote a letter to Mark and described to him in great detail how best to establish such a regime; for mental work I particularly recommend translations, especially reverse ones—namely, first a written translation from a foreign language into Russian and then translate the Russian back into the foreign language. From my own experience I learnt that this was the most rational way of learning a language. In the physical realm, I strongly recommend to him, and I repeat the same to you, daily exercises and then a rub down. This is absolutely essential in solitary confinement.

"From one of your letters forwarded here by Mother I see you have managed to begin some kind of work. As a result of this I hope you will occasionally forget your surroundings and that the time (which usually flies in prison if there are not particularly unfavourable circumstances) will pass almost unnoticed.

"I also advise you to spread your studies systematically over the available books so as to vary them. I remember very well that a change in reading or occupation—from translation to reading, from letter writing to gymnastics,

<sup>9</sup> Letter 78.

<sup>10</sup> Letter 81.

from serious reading to fiction—helped very considerably. Sometimes depression (moods change frequently in prison) is simply the result of fatigue through monotonous impressions or monotonous work. Sometimes it is only necessary to change the activity to return to normal and to control the nerves.

“I remember that in the evening, after a meal, I used regularly to read fiction for relaxation, and I never enjoyed it more than when I was in prison. Above all do not forget the daily compulsory physical exercises. Force yourself to make several dozen different movements (without stopping). It is most important.”

To his mother he was at the same time, as always, tenderly sympathetic. “We were terribly grieved,” he wrote,<sup>11</sup> “to hear that our people’s affairs were so sad. My dear, I do not even know what to advise you. Please do not worry too much. . . . Please, my darling, write when you have a free moment and tell me how you are and feel. . . . I embrace you warmly, my darling, and I hope you will keep cheerful and well. Do you remember when I was in prison you also thought the case was much more dangerous than it turned out to be? and, after all, there can be absolutely no comparison between Manyasha’s and Mark’s case and mine.”

The year 1902 saw Lenin definitely established as the editor of *Iskra*, the organ of his revolutionary social-democrats, and saw also an apparent growth in the number of its adherents throughout Russia. There were various disturbances and riots throughout the country, which Lenin attributed to the effect of their propaganda. It was suggested that it would be well to hold a second Social-Democratic Conference, in order to attempt once more to heal the breach between the two wings, and a preliminary meeting of leaders took place at Belostok in April to settle details. However the meeting became known to the police and all but one of the committee were arrested on leaving it. Thus the whole

<sup>11</sup> Letter 88.

party organization was thrown into apparent chaos. At the same time the editors of *Iskra* were getting themselves into trouble with the German police, and it was found necessary to transfer the editorial offices to London where Lenin then came to live—at 30 Holford Square, near Euston. English cooking was abhorrent to him. “We found that the Russian stomach is not easily adaptable to the ox-tails, skate fried in fat, cake and other mysteries of the English fare,” recorded his wife.<sup>12</sup>

The whole business was apparently extremely trying to Lenin’s nerves, and by the time that the move was completed he had not only passed beyond abuse of the authorities to abuse of the revolutionaries to whom he was opposed, but even beyond that to abuse of those with whom he was working. For instance, the senior member of Lenin’s group was Plekhanov. It was Plekhanov who had led the battle against compromise and economism and whose lusty blows had hitherto won Lenin’s applause. Yet, when in May of this year Plekhanov ventured on some private criticisms of Lenin’s pamphlet on the *Agrarian Programme of Russian Social-Democracy*, Lenin replied,<sup>13</sup> “I have received my article with your remarks. You have a fine idea of tact with regard to your colleagues on the editorial board. You do not hesitate to choose the most contemptuous expressions, not to mention the voting on the suggestions, which you did not even take the trouble to formulate, and even about the voting about style. I should like to know what you would say if I were to answer your article on the programme in the same way? If your aim was to make mutual work impossible—then the way you have chosen will very rapidly help you to succeed. As for our personal, apart from our business, relations, you have finally spoilt them, or more exactly you have achieved their complete cessation.”

Meanwhile the Belostok arrests had given Lenin a new idea. Since all the old committee but one was in prison, a

<sup>12</sup> Wheatley, *Red Eagle*, p. 71.

<sup>13</sup> Letter 91.



new committee had to be formed, and it was Lenin's bold plan that, if he played skilfully, he might so pack that committee as to obtain from it votes swinging the whole organization of the party to the support of his policy. The man whom he used as his agent for this purpose was an intriguing little creature who was to play a considerable part in his life during the next year or two, a certain F. V. Lengnik, a resident of Samara, who had, it seems, known Lenin since student days and was devoted to his policy. "Push your people on to as many committees as possible," Lenin wrote<sup>14</sup> to him. "... Be bolder in this, and in other ways quieter and more cautious. Be wise as serpents and gentle as doves. ... All yours, The Old Man."

That summer Lenin's mother came to Western Europe and spent a fortnight with him and his wife at Loguivy in Brittany. As usual he was seen at his best in his dealings with her. "I hope to see you soon, my darling," he had written<sup>15</sup> before she came. "If only the journey does not tire you too much; you must definitely choose day trains and stop the nights in hotels. Hotels are not expensive abroad and you can spend the night very well in them. But without such rest and with the speed of trains over here and the short stops it is impossible to travel for several days on end. I shall wait with impatience for news of your departure. I advise you to choose express trains in Germany and Austria (you pay a small addition to the third-class fare, but the saving in time is enormous)."

After she had left there were two letters which have survived. In the one he inquired,<sup>16</sup> "Was the rest of the journey pleasant? Did it overtire you? Please write a few words about this after you have rested and settled down a little." In the other<sup>17</sup> "Are you well, my darling? Did the journey tire you very much?"

The cooling of temper had shown Lenin that a breach with Plekhanov would not be opportune. By July he was writing

<sup>14</sup> Letter 92.<sup>15</sup> Letter 90.<sup>16</sup> Letter 97.<sup>17</sup> Letter 98.

to him once more in a friendly tone and taking his side against that of Martov and Vera Zasulich in a small dispute about the inclusion of an article. His main work was the preparation of a book entitled *What is to be Done?* in which he criticized the tactics of the right-wing social-democrats, and a pamphlet entitled *Letter to a Comrade on our Organizational Tasks*. They are important because they contained the definitive statement of the strategy by which Lenin was eventually to triumph and by which communist policy in all non-communist countries is still guided to this day. Lenin demanded in it a complete breach with any old traditions, whether derived from the followers of Bakunin or from sentimental bourgeois liberalism, which proclaimed a faith in the achievement of the Revolution through an appeal to the mythical will of the people. Such a faith was, he said, an attempt to degrade Marxian theory "to the level of the understanding of the backward strata of the masses." In a society which has grown up under the dominance of capitalist education and capitalist pressure it was not to be expected that the majority would have captured the true Marxian ideology. To appeal to the majority would be merely to appeal to a court where the verdict would go against revolution, and, when autocracy gets into difficulties, an astute reactionary tactician will see this and call the bluff. Does the majority vote for revolution in France or England or America? What reason was there to think that it would vote for it in Russia?

What was rather required was, first, the collection of a small band of what he called "professional revolutionaries" — "a very conspiratorial and solid nucleus of professional revolutionaries."<sup>18</sup> By "professional revolutionaries" he meant of course men and women who would devote their whole time to working for revolution and to the perfection of the technique of it. They must be prepared for all suffering and content to live as best they may. They might be given

<sup>18</sup> Letter 94.

leave to work at remunerative tasks only in so far as such were absolutely necessary in order to give them the means of livelihood. They must, he said,<sup>19</sup> "be treasured more than the apple of one's eye, not only in the literal sense of the word, meaning protected from the police, but be kept for this urgent work and not allowed to become interested in other possibly useful but untimely tasks." And they must be utterly obedient to the chosen absolute ruler. It was not of primary importance that there should be very many of these revolutionaries; what was of importance was that they should be utterly trustworthy, utterly devoted and utterly orthodox in their Marxian faith—that is of course, in their acceptance of Lenin's interpretation of Marx.

These men and women were to form the general staff. At the other end of the scale were the privates—the people in every town and factory who were willing to join the party and to enlist under the revolutionary banner. They must accept in a general way the Marxian ideology and know and care enough about it to propagate the desire for revolution, as opportunity offered, among their neighbours and fellow-workers. But it was not necessary that they be masters of every iota of the Marxian gospel, and, as for the secrets of day-to-day tactics, they must specifically be content to remain in ignorance of them. What was required of them was obedience—to strike when they were told to strike, to remain at work when they were told to remain at work, to fight when they were told to fight, to die when they were told to die.

In between the privates and the general staff there would be a whole hierarchy of intermediate officers, as the necessities of a developing situation might demand. From them again the primary requisite would be obedience. Of tactics they should be told as much as might be necessary for the efficient performance of the task to which they were assigned—and no more.

<sup>19</sup> Letter 95

It was not clearly stated who was to stand at the apex of this organization, nor how he was to be appointed, but there was in fact little doubt on the matter. It was Lenin himself who was to stand there, who assumed to himself a power greater than any pope or tsar had ever claimed. He assumed it not out of lust for authority but because by now he had come simply to take it for granted, as the result of his experience of his fellow-revolutionaries, that he alone understood the Marxian gospel and that there were no other hands to which absolute power could safely be entrusted. Plekhanov, Martov, Axelrod and all the other revolutionaries of any intelligence and independence, whatever their first reaction to *What is to be Done?*, soon came to see this—soon came to see that here was the promise of a tyranny, whose little finger would be thicker than the Tsar's loins—a tyranny the more terrible because of the fanatical sincerity of the tyrant. Liberty, Lenin cynically replied to them, was a bourgeois love. "The party organization has for the intellectuals the appearance of an enormous factory." Acceptance of it "seems to them to be enslavement." But fortunately, among the workers, industrialism had already killed the love of liberty. "Thanks to its factory schooling" there was no limit to the tyranny which the proletariat would accept.<sup>20</sup>

Lenin's concern now was with false revolutionaries, and with the capture of the revolutionary movement from them. "Time will not wait and our enemies are also growing," he wrote,<sup>21</sup> and continued "such as *Osvobozhdeniye* and the social revolutionaries and all sorts of social-democratic groups, beginning with the superficial *Zhizn* and ending with those intriguers, the *Struggle* group."

Lenin's bold tactics seemed to be meeting with some success. In the spring of 1902 all the revolutionary organization in South Russia had collapsed into chaos, and he was greatly cheered, when in July, on the resurrection of its

<sup>20</sup> Marcu, *Lenin*, p. 114.

<sup>21</sup> Letter 95.

newspaper, the *Southern Worker*, he was able to induce it to declare for collaboration with *Iskra*. The agent whom he principally used in all this was one E. Y. Levin, of Kharkov. By the end of the year Lenin had become quite hopeful of the achievement of a real unity—that is to say, of the acceptance of his programme by the whole party. “You know, I think it would be a good idea,” he conceded to Plekhanov “. . . if we were to begin (informally) to be more friendly with them. It would be pointless to quarrel with them at the present moment.” And he even went so far as himself to confess a fault to Plekhanov. “I am to blame for the Bulgarian. I repent. I did not write because there were no commissions and I had no idea you were worrying.”<sup>22</sup>

Yet his optimism was soon damped. Whatever the general merits of the policy of centralization, it was very clearly a policy unlikely to work without hitches, when communication between comrades was only possible by subterranean methods and by code. Miscarriage of messages and consequent misunderstandings were almost inevitable. There was, for instance, to have been a meeting of the Organizational Committee in Pskov on 2–15 November 1902. There was however a confusion about time and place, and G. M. Krzhizhanovsky, Lenin’s old friend, Gleb, of Siberian days, missed the meeting. He wrote afterwards to protest against decisions that had been taken there, against the entrustment of responsibility to one, P. A. Krasikov, and the decision to transfer the headquarters of the Committee from Pskov, which is near St. Petersburg on the present Russo-Esthonian frontier, to Kharkov, the great mining and railway centre in the Ukraine, where Levin was resident. Such protests were in direct contradiction to the spirit of obedience which Lenin was seeking to impose upon the movement. No memory of the day when he had asked Gleb to be his best man could be allowed to soften the punishment for such conduct. “I have read your angry letter of the 3rd January,”

he wrote,<sup>23</sup> "and am replying at once. Re correspondence, dogs, etc., the secretary"—he meant his wife—"will send you a reply. . . . In swearing at us you exaggerate our strength and influence; we have come to an agreement here about the Organization Committee. We insisted at the Congress that you should be invited and wrote to you. We could do nothing else, absolutely nothing else, and refuse to be held responsible for anything. The root of the trouble is that Brut"—i.e. Krzhizhanovsky—"was not at the Organization Committee and all that followed was done without him (as also without us). . . . We have not transferred the O.C. office. We have given absolutely no 'power' to Pankrat"—i.e. Krasikov—"But when Pankrat turned out to be the only live man in the Organization Committee, then the result could not be otherwise than power. . . . Pankrat alone has gone over to illegal work, he has set out, has begun to hurry, begun to know everything—and has naturally assumed the rank of corporal." An illuminating phrase, giving a very fair description of the way in which Lenin treated his fellow-revolutionaries. "There was not any one else," he continued. "Cannot you understand that at last? Pankrat is lazy and casual, but he is clever, sensible, knows his job, knows how to fight, one can get on with him. . . . If Brut moves to a lively place, close by, then we will help him to have the office of the Organization Committee moved to where he is and everything may be settled. Otherwise everything will go (if it does go) according to the will of Allah, the will of Pankrat."

Lengnik, Lenin's other agent, in Samara, to whom the task of packing the Committee had been entrusted, had been as unsatisfactory as poor Gleb and Lenin took advantage of the letter to Gleb to tell him so. "I am very angry with Zarin"—i.e. Lengnik—"he will not write sensibly, is apathetic, knows nothing about Kiev, has allowed a split to take place under his very nose. It is positively extraordinary to be so remote from local affairs. And how are we

<sup>23</sup> Letter 102

to blame that, of two members of the Organization Committee equally empowered, Zarin 'sits silent' while at least Pankrat is showing signs of life? I think (I do not know for certain) that Zarin is a man of little initiative and also tied by legality and by the place where he lives"—that is to say, Samara, which Lenin thought impossibly remote.

The men of Samara were now greatly out of favour, and the men of Kharkov greatly in it. Lenin wrote to them a letter of almost fulsome congratulation on their energy and efficiency.

During these months Martov, Lenin's collaborator, was sent round on a number of visits in order to bring into line the revolutionary exiles at the various European centres such as Paris, Berlin, Geneva and Zurich. Some of them had formed a body called the Union of Social-Democrats Abroad, which was putting forward a claim that it should be allowed a certain measure of independence from the central Organization Committee. Lenin of course would not tolerate this. "I believe the Unionites are imagining that there will be two independent sections, a Russian one and a foreign one," Lenin wrote to Martov, then in Paris, at the beginning of February.<sup>24</sup> "We definitely cannot in any way accept such an idea. The Russian Organization Committee . . . should adopt an arch-important and arch-severe attitude, i.e. insisting that the Russian Organization Committee is in charge of everything and no one in the party can do anything other than by order of the Russian Organization Committee. . . . Either recognition of the Organization Committee and *subjection* to it, or *war*. *Tertium non datur*." Martov was instructed to see that Krasikov, who was now Lenin's main ally within Russia, took a most clear stand on this.

At the end of February Lenin himself went over to Paris to deliver some lectures at the Russian Ecole des Sciences Sociales on the agrarian question and to see how the land lay. He was back in London by the end of March and

<sup>24</sup> Letter 105.

writing to his mother of an early spring walk into the country somewhere in the Home Counties. "The other day we took E. V."—his mother-in-law—"for a long walk—we took sandwiches instead of having dinner and went for a whole Sunday 'ins Grune.' (We find that willy-nilly we are doing things in a foreign way; we go for walks on a Sunday, although it is not very comfortable because everywhere is crowded.) We had a splendid walk, the air intoxicated us all as though we were children, and afterwards I had to sleep it off just as I used to do after a day's shooting in Siberia. . . . We find various field-paths; we know the nearest places and are thinking of going further out." On the whole with all its disappointments the business of packing the Committee for the all-important Congress seemed to be going well, and Lenin was content. "I . . . do not suffer from nerves," he wrote.<sup>22</sup> In April he moved across to Geneva, transferring thither the publishing of *Iskra*.

In July came at last the great meeting, the Second Party Conference of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. On 30 July it met at Brussels, but the Belgian police seemed to be excessively interested in its activities. So it was found wiser to move across to London, where it sat until the middle of August. The packing had been cleverly done. The majority of delegates had come pledged to the support of the *Iskra* party, and it was thought by many that the programme would be put through without difficulty. The difficulty came from a quarter whence Lenin does not seem to have looked for it at all.

The most energetic of Lenin's supporters, his lieutenant in the packing of the Conference, had been his old fellow-exile, and fellow editor Martov. But Martov was a man with ideas of his own, by no means content to be merely a lieutenant. Accepting the general necessity of discipline, he yet challenged Lenin's tactics on every detail. Lenin was for making the conditions of admission into the party extremely strict; only one

<sup>22</sup> Letter 106.



who actively participated in one of the organizations should be admitted. Martov challenged him by proposing the vaguer formula "giving the party regular personal co-operation under the guidance of one of the organizations"<sup>20</sup> and won the day. Lenin was elected the head of the board of the Central Organ, the *Iskra*, but Martov was elected the head of the Central Committee, Lenin only a subordinate member. Lenin proposed the expulsion from the board of *Iskra* of three of its six editors, Vera Zasulich and Axelrod, who had abandoned the orthodoxy of social-democracy for the heresy of social revolution, and Potresov, Lenin's old colleague, now fallen from grace. The editorship of *Iskra* would thus have been left in the hands of the powerful triumvirate of Lenin, Martov and Plekhanov. Martov however spoiled that plan by announcing his adherence to his three expelled colleagues and he refused with them to take any part in the production of the next number of *Iskra*. The Mensheviks, or minority party of the Revolutionary Social-Democratic Labour Party, formed a League of Russian Social Revolutionary Social-Democrats and called on the party workers to fight the centralizing tendencies of the Bolsheviks. The Central Committee, under Lenin's control in spite of Martov's headship of it, denounced the policy of the Mensheviks as one of treason.

What, it may be asked, was the quarrel really about? The quarrel between the economists and the revolutionaries, however strange may have been the personal violence with which it was sometimes conducted, was nevertheless a clear quarrel of principle. Between Martov and Lenin there were differences of emphasis, but their differences were but differences of degree. Martov's formula for admission to the party was quite patient of a Leninist interpretation, and, had the leaders on both sides been restrained and balanced men, there was no necessity for a quarrel or split. They were not such men. Lenin was in a sense, as his admirers so often

<sup>20</sup> Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, vol. I, p. 98.

tell us, quite without ambition. He had no desire at all to obtain a high post, valuable only because of the amenities or the salary attached to it. He did not even yearn for power through any lust for domination. But from his mind, as from that of so many fanatics, the distinction between self and the cause had been quite obliterated. He alone understood the cause. A triumph for it save under his leadership was unthinkable. In other words, he was a little mad.

To say this is not to blame him save in so far as a wiser man, before he set out on the career of professional revolution, would have understood that such a career must necessarily have a nervous effect on the patient, which it was beyond human nature to endure and remain whole. The Russian revolutionary's life was either one of a lonely Siberian exile, of furtive conspiracy in the Russian cities, or of the poverty and uncertainty of exile in the underworlds of Europe. The evidence is abundant that all these lives were so unnatural that the liver of them could not expect to preserve his balance. In the history of Man a few great saints have lived persecuted lives and survived them in sanity, but their triumphs have been triumphs won through the assistance of the grace of God. That assistance, which they desperately needed, Lenin and the revolutionaries specifically repudiated. Refusing to admit that they were less than God, they made themselves in the end even less than Man and became incapable of those little decencies and charities, of which even the normal man is capable, without which human life is intolerable and without which it was impossible to obtain even that measure of co-operation which was necessary for the triumph of the Revolution. Krupskaya, in her *Reminiscences*, has painted for us a vivid picture of her husband's agitation during these weeks—how he could not eat, could not sleep, could not sit still. And Lenin himself frankly barked back in reply to a request for pamphlets,<sup>27</sup> "Do not

<sup>27</sup> Letter 114.

bother me about leaflets; I am not a machine and cannot work in the present disgraceful situation."

"I am not a machine." "Unwig me this gentleman." What a confession for a Marxian! In his awful dark night of the soul the atheist came perilously near to doubting his own lack of faith, for he found it hard to believe that the perfidy of his opponents was materialistically determined reflex-action and not, as vain superstition suggested, wickedness. Yet neither to Lenin nor to Krupskaya, describing his distraught condition, does it occur to wonder whether the judgment of such a man was one wholly to be trusted. When a man on the verge of a nervous breakdown thought that he could see nothing but perfidy, treachery and incompetence in every one of his "nearest friends," of those who had shared with him in exile and poverty and the danger of death, the probability was that his own judgment was a little unhinged. But such a probability Lenin never admitted.

After the Conference of London had dissolved Lenin went to Geneva. In spite of the insults which he had heaped on him, the faithful Gleb had remained true to his old master, and in September Lenin wrote to him, "You must act formally and prepare for a definite war with the Martovites. . . . And so let Smith"—i.e. Gleb—"not look upon Egor"—i.e. Martov—"as before. The friendship is at an end. Down with all softheartedness."<sup>11</sup>

November brought Lenin a yet worse blow. The veteran of his party, his leader, had been throughout Plekhanov—Plekhanov who had harangued the first workers' demonstration ever held in Russia when Lenin was only six years old, who had turned his back on Russia and accepted perpetual exile after Alexander's murder, when Lenin was still but eleven, who had led the battle against the economists and "the young men" and won Lenin's applause for the stout blows which he struck, when Lenin first came into exile. Lenin, it will be remembered, had allowed his nerves to

<sup>11</sup> Letter 107.

trick him into violent abuse of Plekhanov in the previous year, but he had thought better of it and had repaired the error. He thought now that he could count on Plekhanov's support against the "compromisers." But old age had brought to Plekhanov a certain mellowness. He was far less clearly insane than the other revolutionaries. For the point at issue between Martov and Lenin he does not seem to have greatly cared, but he was not minded to have the whole movement wrecked because of the brain-storms of neurotics. Of the two leaders Martov at least did not absolutely rule out any possibility of equal co-operation, while Lenin did. Plekhanov, in a letter to Potresov, put forward suggestions for a compromise between the two factions. But they received no gracious welcome from Lenin who saw in them merely a sign that Plekhanov was deserting him and siding with the Mensheviks. He replied by resigning from the board of *Iskra*, and consequently from the party Soviet, of which he was co-opted member as representative of the Central Organ, and *Iskra* became as a consequence henceforward an anti-Leninist Menshevik organ.

The first number of the new *Iskra* contained an article from the pen of Martov, entitled "Our Congress," and giving his account of the quarrel. Lenin wrote at once to the Central Committee in Russia, denouncing it as an attempt "to run down not only Lenin . . . but also the Central Committee and all the Bolsheviks."<sup>10</sup> The reply to it must be "war with the disorganizers," and by war he meant a yet more efficient packing of the Central and all subordinate committees so that any attempt of the Martovites to speak for the party might be firmly voted down. "Move all our forces into the Committees and the circuits," was the way in which he put it. ". . . We must push people on to shaky Committees and win over Committees in the name of the slogan, i.e. against disorganization." Then, when all was prepared, another Congress at which the Martovites could be voted out of

<sup>10</sup> Letter 110

existence. At the same time he wrote a formal letter to the editors of *Iskra*, expressing his desire for peace but denouncing their indiscipline which had made peace impossible.

Two however could play at the game of packing, and, different as was the language in which he described it, it was evident that Martov was pursuing the same policy as that of Lenin. The faithful Gleb had written to Lenin, pleading for a more conciliatory policy. "Do give up your naive hope of working peacefully in such an atmosphere," Lenin replied to him. "The Martovites are moving towards war," he wrote.<sup>30</sup> "At the Geneva meeting Martov shouted that they were strong. In the newspaper they attack us and basely misrepresent the question and cover up their cunning with wails about bureaucratism at your expense. Martov continues to shout right and left about the complete inadequacy of the Central Committee. In short it is both childish and impossible to doubt that the Martovites are aiming at getting hold of the Central Committee through cunning, boycott and scandal. . . . Their tactics are clear; hypocritically to cover up the opposition . . . to the Central Committee and surreptitiously to throw mud at the Central Committee through the medium of the newspaper. Therefore they must be repaid in their own coin."

The Central Committee was not quite convinced that the split was irrevocable or that the open battle of a new Congress would not help matters. Lenin therefore wrote to it again on 17-30 December 1903.<sup>31</sup> "The Martovites have taken the Central Organ to conduct their war, and now the war has spread all along the line; persecution in *Iskra*, fighting at public lectures (the other day Martov was reading a paper in Paris about the split before an audience of a hundred people and fought with Lebedev"—S. I. Grusev, a delegate from the Don Committee, who took the side of the Bolsheviks —)" "and the most shameless agitation against the Central Committee. It would be unpardonably short-sighted to

<sup>30</sup> Letter 112.

<sup>31</sup> Letter 114.

imagine that this will not spread to Russia." There must be a Congress, where the Martovites could be finally outvoted and exposed.

Yet the Central Committee remained obstinately unconvinced, while Plekhanov moved steadily further and further away from Lenin the more clearly that he came to see him as the great enemy of peace. At the end of January the Council held a meeting at Geneva, but the only result of it was to convince Lenin<sup>12</sup> that "Plekhanov is on the side of the Martovites, overriding us in anything at all important." Plekhanov proposed the co-optation of an equal number of Mensheviks and Bolsheviks onto the Central Committee in order that both factions might have equal representation there and unity be thus preserved. "Only the blind can fail to see now what the game is," Lenin cried. "... Not a single member of the Central Committee will consent to a disgraceful and absurd role; to accept people who *foist themselves*." If the Committee did not reply with the immediate summoning of a Congress, Lenin threatened his own resignation and that of his friend, Lengnik. Yet the Committee was still unconvinced, and Lenin replied in the middle of February with vitriolic abuse of it for its "disgusting mouthing about peace."<sup>13</sup> He poured scorn on those who were ready for the sake of a quiet life to accept insult and to tolerate treachery. "Give up all your comic pretensions to be leading others by wiping spittle from your faces." "I really think we have bureaucrats and formalists, and not revolutionaries, serving on the Central Committee. The Martovites are spitting in their faces, but they merely wipe their faces and moralize to me that it is useless to try fighting." Even the faithful Gleb had now fallen from grace. "Clair's"—Gleb's—"behaviour is disgraceful," he wrote.

Yet Lenin was to some extent bluffing. The strength of his position was that he could now plausibly argue that the majority of the party had declared for him and that the

<sup>12</sup> Letter 116

<sup>13</sup> Letter 118

opposition was guilty of disloyalty. If he broke with the Central Committee, he destroyed the whole logic of his case. That very different man, Trotsky, was at this very time ploughing a lonely furrow of characteristic paradox, at one and the same time Marxian and individualist. In his *Our Political Task* he attacked the extreme discipline for which Lenin was calling. But Lenin had no wish to become a lone wolf. Such a role was opposed to his temperament; his philosophy taught him its futility. The Revolution could only be achieved by a disciplined party. An isolated revolutionary was an absurdity. Afterwards, in 1917, he attributed the success of the Russian Revolution to his rigidity fifteen years before, and in 1921 told the German communists that their revolution had failed because they had not purged their party of opportunists and enemies of discipline, while there was yet time. If he could not capture the party, he might as well abandon all, and yet psychologically such abandonment was impossible to him. For he was by now a professional revolutionary—*et praeterea nihil*. If he turned away from revolution, whither should he turn?

Therefore, when eventually the Committee in March gave its definitive decision against a Congress, Lenin's reply was surprisingly moderate and compromising. Instead of the full resignation which he had threatened, he and Lengnik contented themselves with a decision "*temporarily* to relinquish their duties as members of the Council (remaining members of the Central Committee) until the true character of our differences with the majority of the Central Committee have been cleared up," and added the most un-Leninsque postscript, "we are anxious for a friendly clearing-up of differences and misunderstandings."<sup>36</sup> Lenin announced to them that he was going to take leave for two months, but, though it is true that he went away from Geneva, he did not take the holiday which they might reasonably have deduced from such a phrase. He spent the time rather in preparing his

<sup>36</sup> Letter 119.

pamphlet *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* in which he stated his case against any form of compromise. An increase of numbers, he argued, as the price of a loosening of discipline was not a victory but a defeat. He was content to wait an opportune time for the publication.

The Central Committee from its side, anxious for peace with Martov, did not wish that peace to be at the expense of war with Lenin, if that could be avoided. It therefore sent to him his friend, Noskov, to see what could be arranged. A somewhat indeterminate agreement was reached between the two on 13-26 May that they would act together in the name of the Central Committee, though, as no agreement was reached on the all-important question of the Congress, it was a little difficult to see just what they should act together about. Lenin was in more genial mood—or perhaps it was a subtle manoeuvre—and wrote to Gleb, suggesting that he should join him for a holiday in the Alps with no politics in it.<sup>35</sup> "It would be splendid if you could be clever enough to come over here for a week—not on business but simply for a rest and to meet me somewhere in the Alps. Do believe that you will be definitely wanted." Lenin withdrew up into the hills at Meiringen. Meanwhile the Central Committee, now under Plekhanov's influence, pushed forward its new plan of conciliation and co-opted on to it a few Mensheviks. Lenin in reply defined his policy<sup>36</sup> as one of "armed peace," of "withdrawing with protests," and sent to Plekhanov a pamphlet over his signature and that of thirty-six colleagues, redefining his position. And in August, still from his Achilles' tent in the Swiss mountains, he drew up a formal letter of protest which he sent to the Central Committee agents and to the Committee members of the Social-Democratic Labour Party, who supported the Bolsheviks at the Second Party Congress. The gist of his argument was that the Congress was the ultimate source of sovereignty, that the Committee only derived its authority

<sup>35</sup> Letter 120.

<sup>36</sup> Letter 121.



from the Congress, that a Bolshevik Congress had elected a committee to carry through a Bolshevik policy and that this committee, by co-opting and compromising with Mensheviks, was acting treacherously and *ultra vires*. To Noskov's invitation that they should meet again and talk things over, he replied, "I cannot share your regret that we have failed to meet."

The argument from another pen might have been respectable, but from that of Lenin it was difficult to take its sincerity very seriously. For Lenin had notoriously packed the Congress and was notoriously, as against any who might hold weak, liberal theories of limited delegation, the champion of iron discipline and utter subordination. Everyone knew that, if Lenin had captured the machine, he would have used it to compel submission to his own policy, ruthlessly indifferent whether Congress had had such a policy in mind when they voted him into power. His objection was not that the machine was strong but that he was not the master of the machine.

In August the Central Committee pushed on its policy of conciliation. It reached an agreement and recognized *Iskra* under the editorship of Lenin's old colleagues as its organ and sent to Lenin an invitation to return to the board and continue the paper as before. But at the same time it reiterated its refusal to call a new official party conference at which decisions would be by majority vote, but asked instead for unofficial conferences between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks at which the attempt should be made to settle differences by agreement. Lenin replied by definitely resigning from the Central Committee, demanding again the summoning of a third party congress and ostentatiously disinteresting himself from all political activity so long as he could not have his way. "I am still having a summer holiday," he wrote to his mother. "I walk, I bathe and do nothing in particular. I have had a splendid rest this summer."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Letter 122.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR

IT often happens in politics that a quarrel which was not, to begin with, a quarrel of principle soon becomes so. For men are led to their opinions so largely by obstinacy. Thus before the autumn was through, the Mensheviks, in their reaction from the Bolsheviks, had begun to talk about the desirability and possibility of co-operation with liberals. The argument was that Russia was so little industrialized, her proletarian population so small that the chances for an immediate proletarian revolution were negligible. It was wiser to co-operate for the moment with bourgeois liberals in demanding such liberal reforms as parliamentary government, freedom of speech and the Press, and so on. These liberal liberties, when once achieved, could be used for socialist propaganda. Under the repressions of autocracy such propaganda was extremely difficult.

There was a degree of force in such arguments, as there was also a degree of force in Lenin's counter that the Mensheviks assumed that it was they who would be able to use their bourgeois allies but that it was more probable that in reality the very processes of the alliance would corrupt them and that, by the time that revolution was possible, they would have lost their enthusiasm for it. Who, he asked in effect, will prove to be the tiger and who the Lady of Riga, and it was at least an even-money bet. At any rate it was certain that the Mensheviks by their flirtations with liberalism did give Lenin a colourable case for maintaining that his difference from them was much deeper than a personal difference. For the Mensheviks, like the Bolsheviks,

still claimed to be Marxians. And, whether or not the policy of co-operation with liberals was a wise policy, it was certainly not a Marxian policy. Lenin replied with a vigorous organization of purely Bolshevik committees in all the important towns of Russia. It was necessary for him to keep up a constant bombardment even of these committees in order to make sure that they did not slip into base attempts at conciliation, but on the whole he was successful.

The hope of the Bolsheviks lay in launching a paper of their own. As long as the only revolutionary paper was *Iskra* and *Iskra* was dominated by what he called "the unnatural and rotten political union of Plekhanov, Martynov and Trotsky",<sup>1</sup> there was no chance of effectively exposing before the world the antics of "all sorts of disgusting vermin, such as the Central Committee." The difficulty was money, but somehow he managed to collect it and by the end of the year was ready to launch upon the world his own paper, *Vpered*, or *Forward*. Success quite restored his spirits, and on Christmas Eve he wrote in high glee to his old comrade, Essen,<sup>2</sup> "Our spirits have been raised and we are all terribly busy now. An announcement about the publication of our newspaper *Vpered* came out yesterday. All the Bolsheviks are encouraged and are rejoicing as never before. At last we have broken up the cursed dissension and are working harmoniously with those who want to work and not to create scandals. A good group of literary collaborators has been got together. . . . The Bolshevik committees are joining together; they have already chosen a bureau, and now the organ will completely unite them. Hurrah! Do not lose heart, we are all reviving now and will revive. . . . Everything is still ahead." And to Zcmlyacha who had worked for him in Russia, he wrote, "Hurrah! you have worked splendidly . . . and can be congratulated on an enormous success."

<sup>1</sup> Letter 125.

<sup>2</sup> Letter 131.

As one reads the letters and the story of the Russian revolutionaries, it is almost easy to forget that there was a Russian regime against which they were in revolt. So exclusively are they dominated by their own faction fights that they almost forget to demonstrate either why it was necessary to have a revolution or how that revolution was to be achieved. Yet, the year 1904 saw a development in general Russian history that did a great deal more to hasten the coming of the Revolution than any of the policies at that moment either of Lenin or of Martov—the Russo-Japanese War. The record of history can tell us of liberal governments that have fallen victims to revolution because their creed has not allowed them to suppress their enemies with the necessary ruthlessness, but history has hardly an instance of a government so incompetent that it has not been able to preserve itself in power provided that it was sufficiently ruthless to do so. It can indeed tell of prætorian revolutions, when the revolting soldiery transfer the throne from one sovereign to another, but such a revolution will never of its nature be one of subversion, because it is not to be expected that the soldiers will favour the overthrow of all order, since it is upon the preservation of order that their power depends. As long as there is peace, an autocracy can survive. It is unsuccessful foreign war that gives revolution its opportunity.

Now Russia had been one of the great expanding powers of the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the century her frontiers were still many hundred miles distant either from Afghanistan or from the Pacific Coast. Then in the course of a century, in which her expansion was more rapid than that of any other powers save only Great Britain and the United States, she pushed down through Turkestan to Afghanistan and the gate of British India, and through the Amur district down to the Pacific at Vladivostok. The main explanation of her expansion, as of that of the United States and the British Dominions, was doubtless that it is

of the nature of an organized state to extend its power over unorganized areas just beyond its frontier. By the 1870's however Russia had extended about as far as was possible without challenging the opposition of organized power. The great powers of the West perhaps a little resented her possession of Poland, and, certainly, with a triumphant Bismarckian Germany as her neighbour, there was no possibility of further expansion in that direction. The European balance of power would not permit aggression against the Scandinavian countries nor against Austria-Hungary. The only possibility in the West was that of a further advance into the decadent Turkish Empire and Russia had there her still unfulfilled dream of the mastery of Constantinople. However the Congress of Berlin in 1878 proved to her that Great Britain would never tolerate the realization of that dream, and similar warnings at the time of the Merv and Pendjeh incidents warned her that further attempts at expansion in the direction of Afghanistan would be more expensive than fruitful.

A wise government would perhaps have reflected that after all Russia already possessed the largest continuous area of empire in the world and would have been content to abandon ambitions of expansion and turn to the development of its own country. Unfortunately the Russian government was by no means wholly wise nor was it by any means wholly free. Russia, backward in her industrialism, was dependent for her development on foreign capital. Germany was her neighbour, and Germany at first supplied the lion's share of that foreign capital. It was German policy after 1870 to keep France in isolation by binding all the other Great Powers in friendship to Germany. Consequently Bismarck formed the Dreikaiserbund between Germany, Austria and Russia. But Russian and Austrian ambitions were directly opposed to one another in the Balkans, and it was difficult even for so superb a juggler as Bismarck permanently to preserve friendship both with Austria and

with Russia. Eventually he decided that it was necessary to choose between the two and that, if the choice were to be made, Austria was to be preferred to Russia. In 1887 he therefore instructed the Reichsbank to refuse to accept Russian bonds as collateral security for loans, and thus deliberately threw Russia into the arms of France.

The difference between German loans and French loans was this. Bismarck after 1870 was working for peace. He did not intend to use the Russian army in a new campaign against France; he only intended to make sure that the Russian army was not used by the French in a new campaign against him. Therefore he was not especially concerned to build up the military efficiency of Russia, and the German capital that was invested in Russia was invested in the genuine development of the country, and only received reward in so far as there was a genuine increase in the productivity out of which that reward could be paid. But the French were primarily interested not in the general development but in the military efficiency of their ally. They invested money not where it would make Russia a richer country but where it would make her a more formidable country. According to Count Witte, the Russian minister, 37 per cent of the Russian railways were built for strategic rather than for economic reasons.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore in the last quarter of the century Russia's indebtedness was increasing more rapidly than her wealth. Yet the French, for all their concern with military efficiency, still insisted that dividends should be paid. How could they be paid? It was a clear proposition in mathematics that they could only be paid at the expense of a reduced standard of living. Thus during the reign of Alexander III from 1881 to 1894 taxation was increased by 29 per cent and the peasants' allotment of land, already inadequate, still further reduced.<sup>4</sup> But there is, as Lenin and his fellow Bolsheviks

<sup>3</sup> Feis, *Europe the World's Banker*, p. 211.

<sup>4</sup> See article on Russia in *Encyclopædia Britannica* by P. Miliukov.

were later to learn themselves from drastic experience, a very definite limit to the amount of his crop that it is physically possible to requisition from the peasant. If he cannot keep the substantial portion, the peasant will refuse to produce.

Therefore by Nicholas II's reign the Russian government was faced with a dilemma. Dependent on the continuance of foreign credits, it did not dare to repudiate. At the same time it was not possible to push down further the standard of living of the people, and without such a reduction where could the interest for the past loans be found? The answer seemed to lie in the development of vast, rich and sparsely inhabited Siberia, and consequently in the early years of this century the Trans-Siberian railway was built. Yet Siberia, even with the railway, could never pay its way unless the Russians also owned the ice-free terminus of the railway at Port Arthur. In the Chino-Japanese War of 1895 the Japanese had conquered the Liao-Tung Peninsula and proposed to annex it to themselves by the Treaty of Shimonoseki. Russia, however, supported by France and Germany, stepped in and compelled the Japanese to waive their claim to continental territory on the ground that such annexation would be destructive of the integrity of China. In compensation the Japanese were to receive from China an indemnity of 400,000 francs. This money the Russians loaned to the Chinese, having themselves first borrowed it from the French. The Russians pushed forward and made themselves virtual masters of Northern China, and, when in 1897 the Germans seized Kiaochow, the Russians felt themselves bound in compensation to seize Port Arthur. Meanwhile the Japanese had accepted the Chinese indemnity with as good a grace as they could and had applied it grimly to the building up of their own armaments.

By 1903 the Japanese had so strengthened themselves that it was possible for their diplomats to challenge the Russians in a language of vigorous menace. The wisest

Russian military advisers, such as Kuropatkin, the Minister of War, were well aware that the chances were against a Russian military victory over Japan and consequently strongly advised in favour of a policy of moderation in the Far East, the abandonment of Port Arthur to China in exchange for concessions near Vladivostok. At first the Tsar was inclined to accept his advice but then "a lateral influence suddenly made itself felt."<sup>5</sup> The investors, Russian, British, French and Belgian, who had put their money into the Trans-Siberian railway, feared that it would never earn them a profit if Port Arthur was returned to Chinese hands, nor were the London or the Paris stock exchanges the best places in the world from which to judge a military situation in Northern China. They quite miscalculated Japanese strength, told the Tsar that Kuropatkin was a small-hearted, nervous man and advised a policy of courage. The Tsar was easily persuaded and soon felt that he had already more than half beaten the Japanese when he had designated them as "monkeys."<sup>6</sup> They had seen to it, too, that he was the holder of some Korean investments. Far from withdrawing in either Manchuria or Port Arthur the Russians manifested instead their intention of pressing on into Korea. At that point, in February 1904, negotiations were broken off and the Japanese attacked them without waiting for a formal declaration of war.

The Japanese were of course in no position to carry the war into Russian territory and never deluded themselves with any hopes of doing so. Their objective was to establish their hegemony in the Far East. Obviously the Russian Government was absolutely the master of a vastly larger army than that of the Mikado. But the Japanese hope was that they would be able to throw their army into the field at once against the small Russian Pacific garrison of 80,000 and overwhelm it. It was calculated that the transport of further large forces from Europe along the enormous,

<sup>5</sup> Fox, *Lenin*, p. 115.

<sup>6</sup> Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, vol. I, p. 47.



new and as yet most inefficient Trans-Siberian railway would be so lengthy a task that the Russians could be driven back from Port Arthur, Manchuria and Korea and the objectives of war attained before reinforcements arrived.

The Japanese, as it proved, greatly underrated the efficiency of the Trans-Siberian railway, and, though the results of the fighting of the first six months of the war were in their favour, yet by October 1904, the Russians were by no means finally beaten, while the steady influx of troops over the railway had brought to them at last a superiority of numbers. The Japanese, who had thrown their all into the war at the beginning, were in danger of exhaustion, and *tout pouvait se rattabler* for the Russians, if only there had been enthusiasm for the war at home. Even after their further defeats by land at Mukden and by sea at Tsushima at the beginning of the next year the Russians could well have continued the war, had it not been for the rising tide of discontent at home.

It was this discontent which drove the Tsar to sue for peace in the summer of 1905. Whatever the constitution, government must in a certain sense be government by consent if it is to survive at all. And this is particularly true of a government that is asking people to die for it. A particular mutiny may be suppressed, but, if there is a concerted, general, continuing refusal to die, the government falls. Even before the war there had been signs of discontent in Russia. In 1902 there had been peasant-risings in Poltava and Kharkov in the Ukraine. There had been strikes in the Baku oil-fields and in Odessa, Kiev and elsewhere in 1903. There had been student disturbances. Indeed the desire of the Minister for the Interior, for "a victorious little war"<sup>1</sup> to make people forget their troubles was one of the factors in vanquishing the saner advice against war of the Minister for War, Kuropatkin. As the news of defeats came through, an all-Russian Zemstvo Congress met in

<sup>1</sup> Sergei Witte, *Reminiscences*, "Reign of Nicholas II," vol. I, p. 262.

St. Petersburg in November 1904, and put forward its demand for a representative assembly.

Then in January large strikes broke out in the Putilov armaments works. A priest of the name of Father Gapon was appointed by the police to put himself at the head of the workers, and on Sunday, 9-22 January marched with them in procession to the Winter Palace of the Tsar. They were not revolutionaries. They came rather as pathetic children to beg of their father a remedy for the unbearable evils, and they made their demands in an old-fashioned, feudal language, which sounded as if it had been lifted from the Middle Ages. They denounced indeed "capitalist exploiters of the working-class," but they turned to the Tsar not, as the Marxians did, as the accomplice of the exploiters, but in the true medieval fashion as their remedy against them, as the defender of the poor against the over-mighty subject. Nor did they threaten violence if he failed them. They merely said that there was no alternative to them but death. "If thou wilt not answer our prayer we shall die here on the Square before thy palace."

They spoke more truly than they knew. The crowd advanced on the Winter Palace, taking with them their wives and children, bearing no arms but carrying ikons and portraits of the Tsar and singing hymns. When they reached the Palace, the order was given to them to disperse. And, when that order was not immediately obeyed, the rifles barked out, and, after the volley of rifle-fire, the Cossacks rode in among them with their whistling whips, or nagaikas, striking out to right and left. Some say that fifteen hundred perished, some that it was only two hundred. Whatever the figure, it is certain that this afternoon of Bloody Sunday was the afternoon, spiritually speaking, of the abdication of the Tsar. No longer was the Tsar the Father of his People. No longer could it be hoped that salvation would come to Russia by the traditional road—by the word of a king.

Krupskaya has told us the story how Lenin heard the

news in Geneva.<sup>8</sup> "Vladimir Ilyich and I were on our way to the library and met the Lunacharskys. I remember the figure of Lunacharsky's wife, Anna Alexandrovna, who was so excited that she could not speak, but only helplessly wave her muff. We went where all the Bolsheviks who had heard the Petersburg news were instinctively drawn—to the Lepeshinsky's emigrant restaurant. We wanted to be together. The people gathered there hardly spoke a word to one another, they were so excited. With tense faces they sang the 'Revolutionary Funeral March.' Everyone was overwhelmed with the thought that the Revolution had already commenced, that the bonds of faith in the Tsar were broken, that now the time was quite near when 'tyranny would fall, and the people will rise up—great, mighty and free.' 'War is declared in Russia,' " wrote Lenin.<sup>9</sup>

Bloody Sunday was a Government blunder on the short view as well as on the long. All through 1905 there were constant labour troubles of ever-increasing gravity. With a foolish inconsistency the Government followed up its savagery by the appointment of a special committee "to elucidate the reasons of the workers' discontent in St. Petersburg and the suburbs and to find means to eliminate it"—though why a committee should be needed to discover the grievance of a man who had been struck by a Cossack's whip, it was hard to know. Senator Shidlovsky was given the chairmanship of this committee, and the workmen were invited to elect representatives to sit on it. If the Government imagined that they would be thus easily able to appease the workmen's discontent, they reckoned without common sense, and above all without Lenin. Lenin at once saw in this an opportunity for a characteristic stroke of tactics. He contrived that the Bolsheviks got themselves elected as the workmen's representatives, and the Bolsheviks then refused to allow the committee to discuss any details by putting forward as the workmen's demand the enactment of the full Marxian

<sup>8</sup> Fox, *Lenin*, p. 120.

<sup>9</sup> *The Beginning of the Revolution in Russia*.

programme. Shidlovsky of course ruled out of order the discussion of such a programme and as a consequence the committee was dissolved. The workmen's representatives were arrested, but they had served their purpose. At about the same time—in February—most of the members of the Central Committee of the Social-Democratic party were also arrested at the house of Leonid Andreyev, the author, who was at that time allied with the social-democrats, his story *They Lived* having first appeared in their paper *Zhizn* some years before.

For Lenin it was a time of great crisis and of great opportunity. He felt that he alone was capable of guiding the movement at this all-important moment. Inactivity was unthinkable. At the same time activity was somewhat difficult to justify, for it was Lenin himself who had propounded the theories of extreme submission to the Central Committee, and now he was in revolt against the Central Committee. It was his faithful Litvinov who invented for him the happy formula of reconciliation. Litvinov propounded to Lenin an ingenious theory which seemed to owe more to Rousseau than to Marx. It was that the Central Committee had *ipso facto* lost its right to obedience in detail, when it manifestly ceased to be Marxian in general policy. Apostasy necessarily connoted abdication. And, as it was Lenin who decided that there had been apostasy, that was a satisfactory solution.

Therefore Lenin summoned what he called a third Congress of the Revolutionary Social-Democratic Labour Party "against the will of the Central Committee and the Soviet which are not part of it." It was a purely Bolshevik Congress. Gusev, who had endeared himself to Lenin by having a free fight with Martov at the Paris meeting in the previous year—Gusev fought under the name of Lebedev—was then Lenin's right-hand man and was the Russian organizer of the Congress. His activities brought him under the notice of the police, and Lenin wrote on 22 March—4 April to

warn him.<sup>10</sup> "You yourself wrote that they were beginning to follow and watch you. . . . I know from my own experience and from the experience of masses of comrades that possibly the most difficult thing for a revolutionary to do is to leave a dangerous place *in time*. . . . Therefore I consider it my duty to insist in the most emphatic manner that you should leave Petersburg for a time. It is absolutely necessary. No excuses whatsoever, no considerations for the work, must delay that step. . . . Appoint some young assistant for the time being, say a month or two, to take the higher positions. . . . Once again I insistently advise you to go *at once* to the provinces for a month."

Gusev obeyed and fled and they all met next month at the Congress in London. At the same time the Mensheviks held a Congress of their own at Geneva. The Bolshevik Congress adopted a new party constitution by which the council was abolished and all power concentrated in the hands of the Central Party Committee. Of this Committee Lenin was voted head. He was also voted editor of the new party organ, the *Proletariat*. The *Iskra* was of course declared no longer to have any authority to speak for the party. Resolutions were also passed, pledging the party to join in revolutionary activity when its authorities should declare the moment for it to have come and offering support to the peasants in their demand for confiscation of the large landed estates.

The next few months were filled with insincere manoeuvrings for a re-union between the two groups in which each was in reality primarily concerned to throw upon the other the responsibility for the split, and also in a characteristic quarrel between Lenin and Plekhanov about which group should have the right to represent Russian socialism in the International Socialist Bureau at Brussels. It was however for the developments of the general Russian situation that these months were mainly notable.

<sup>10</sup> Letter 198.

The sailors on the *Potyemkin*, one of the most powerful ships of the Black Sea fleet, entered a protest to their officers against the badness of the meat which they were expected to eat. The officers replied by ordering the execution of the leaders of the protest. The firing squad however refused to fire and the ship broke into mutiny. The officers were thrown into the sea, and the ship sailed into the harbour of Odessa, where a strike was already in progress, flying the red flag. For the moment it looked as though there might be a general mutiny of the Black Sea fleet, but in the event only one other ship joined the *Potyemkin*. The crew then sailed their ship to Rumania, where they surrendered themselves.

That and other symptoms however warned the Government that it was necessary to make some concession. It was not yet prepared to make a concession to democracy. It toyed rather with the notion of making such concessions as might detach from the democracy the middle-class, which was up till now substantially attached to it. Therefore in August it announced the convention of a consultative assembly, the so-called Bulygin Duma, to be elected on a very restricted franchise. This concession by no means satisfied the discontented. On the contrary it was widely denounced as a trick. Rioters in all parts of the country redoubled their activities, convinced that what they had won they had won by making nuisances of themselves and that their hope to win more lay in making yet greater nuisances. Politicians of widely differing parties refused to co-operate with the scheme, and it was to this policy of non-co-operation that Lenin vigorously lent himself. Such were indeed the obvious tactics for him; for with its restricted franchise the Bolsheviks could never have won any representation in the Bulygin Duma. It was therefore essential to make it a fiasco. Lenin demanded instead the arming of the working-classes.

In August the war was brought to an end, and Count Witte, the most intelligent of the Tsarist statesmen of the

day, returning to Russia from the signing of the Treaty of Portsmouth, found, as he reports in his *Memoirs*, the whole country in chaos and on the verge of disruption. In October there was a railway strike, which began over a dispute concerning pension rights, but soon spread into a general strike with political objectives. Count Witte saw that the only hope for the regime was to divide its opponents by generous constitutional concessions, which would be acceptable to the liberals and bring them over to the Government side against the socialists. He therefore issued a decree, promising extension of the franchise, the institution of civil liberties and the definite concession of legislative power to the new Duma. At the same time he took the precaution to raise for the Government a large loan on the Paris market, sufficient in case of necessity to make it financially independent of the Duma for a long time. The professedly democratic French politicians with the radical M. Caillaux as Finance Minister, while offering their public congratulations to Russia on its constitutional achievement, yet saw to it that the autocracy was sufficiently financed that there might be no risk of losing a military ally.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile the necessities of the crisis had forced the revolutionary parties to sink their differences. A soviet had been formed in St. Petersburg. The soviet (which in itself is merely a neutral word for council) was not at that date an exclusively Bolshevik body. Rather was it an all-inclusive body containing representatives of all those groups who saw that they must either hang together or hang separately. Prominent in it was the Jew Bronstein, now known as Trotsky, who assumed the leadership, partly because of his great energy and the undoubted superiority of his talents and partly because of a somewhat arrogant individualism, which had prevented him from hitherto definitely attaching himself to any of the groups into which the revolutionary parties were divided and which in these circumstances of coalition

<sup>11</sup> See article on Russia in *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

put him at an advantage. Lenin, watching events from abroad through detached and somewhat pedantic eyes, was at first inclined to be a little suspicious of these schemes of co-operation. The Soviet, he said, was not "a workers' parliament and not an organization of proletarian administration, but a fighting organization for the achievement of definite ends."<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile the Government, or at least some of its less scrupulous servants, followed out the policy of diverting public indignation from the regime and against the Jews. Invitations to pogroms were issued and met with at least sufficient success to confuse the issue. Count Witte's tactics in dividing the liberals from the socialists were also successful, and before the menace of general strikes it was not difficult to find many men in Russia, quite outside the governing classes, who thought that they had more to lose from a revolutionary regime than from the preservation of tsarism. These men formed what a later age would have called a fascist party and what was known then as the Union of Russian People under the leadership of a Dr. Dubrovin.

The last months of 1905 were filled with a confusion of riots, agrarian and industrial, in all parts of Russia. In November Lenin returned to Russia and established himself in St. Petersburg as editor of the *Novaya Zhizn*, or *New Life*. He also contributed to the *Borba*, or *Struggle*, the Bolsheviks' Moscow paper. Other revolutionary papers were at the same time being issued by Trotsky and others calling on the workers not to let slip their opportunity. On 2-15 November the St. Petersburg Soviet called a second general strike in protest against the court-martialing of naval mutineers at Kronstadt and the declaration of martial law. The strike met with some success in St. Petersburg but was a failure throughout the rest of the country. The Government interpreted this failure as evidence that the tide had turned and that the time had come for a counterstroke. On

<sup>12</sup> See Lenin, "Lecture on 1905 Revolution," *Works*, vol. III.



26 November–9 December they arrested the President of the St. Petersburg Soviet, Nosar, and on 2–15 December captured the whole of the rest of the Soviet in session. On hearing the news the Moscow Soviet declared a general strike, but the Government brought up troops and after ten days of street fighting the revolution was suppressed. Street fighting in other Russian towns at the same time also ended in favour of the Government, and by the end of the year the armed insurrection was definitely suppressed.

Trotsky and most of the other revolutionary leaders were now in gaol. Lenin had however escaped arrest. He had spent November between Moscow and St. Petersburg, but it happened that at the time of the arrests in December he was at Tammerfors in Finland, where the Bolsheviks were holding a conference to discuss the situation. The experience of the last months had taught him, he fancied, the lesson that foreign war was the great opportunity of the revolutionary and the emotion of patriotism was not so deeply felt among the proletariat but that, if a brave man spoke out against it, the workers would refuse to be beguiled by its opportunity. The Tsarist Government was invincible in peace, but capitalism of its nature inevitably brought war. It had only just saved itself by admitting defeat and calling off the war. Next time it would not be possible to call off the war and the opportunity would come. "Wars to-day," he wrote, "are waged by the peoples."<sup>18</sup> In order that their wars might be fought for them, the capitalists had to put ideas into the heads of the workers and weapons into their hands. The ideas and the weapons would in the end inevitably turn against the tyrants. The introduction of conscription was the first step towards the triumph of communism. It was necessary to prepare, to wait and then to strike.

He was of course, perfectly right in his estimate of the insufficiency of Russian patriotism. It was through the

<sup>18</sup> Fox, *Lenin*, p. 118.

correctness of that estimate that twelve years later he was to conquer. But he was wrong in imagining that the workers of other nations were as the Russian workers. Lenin, for all his cosmopolitanism, was a Russian through and through. He understood the Russians as no other man of his time. But his years of foreign residence and international conferences brought him into but little intimate contact with foreign minds. To them he was extraordinarily insensitive, and in his calculations concerning the behaviour of foreigners he was almost always wrong.

For the moment there was no hope of success in armed insurrection, and even his pedantry was able to see the disastrous consequences of disunion among the social democrats. Therefore he reversed his policy of non-co-operation, consented to the reopening of negotiations for union with the Mensheviks and to Bolshevik participation in the Duma elections. In January 1906, he was back in Russia proper and visiting Moscow, arranging for the fourth Congress of the Social-Democratic Party, but in March he was discovered by the police and was only just able to escape arrest by fleeing the country.

In April the Fourth Congress, which was to re-establish unity, met at Stockholm. The Mensheviks had succeeded in carrying the elections this time and had sixty-two delegates to the Bolshevik forty-nine. Lenin urged the Congress to pledge itself to a scheme for land nationalization, but the Mensheviks, arguing that such a scheme would necessarily strengthen the state, which they assumed would still be the tsarist state, voted him down. A formal unity was re-established, but the Bolsheviks still kept their separate organization and the unity was never very sincere. After the Congress Lenin returned to Russia where he continued with Bolshevik propaganda, paying little attention to his Menshevik nominal superiors.

In the same month of April the Duma met. Of its 524 members 177 belonged to the Cadet, or Liberal party, and

another 100 were divided between the Social Revolutionaries, the Social-Democrats and other radical groups. The Right therefore was in a minority, and the Government, which had by now recovered its confidence, had no intention of following a policy which would commend itself to a Left and Centre majority. After a short and stormy life the Duma was therefore dissolved in July, and its Cadet and socialist members withdrew to Viborg, just over the frontier in Finland (which was beyond the reach of ordinary Russian police action) and issued thence a declaration denouncing the dissolution and announcing that the future "free" Russian state would not accept liability for the debts that the "illegal" Government might now incur.

Shortly after the meeting of the Duma the Tsar had dismissed the comparatively liberal, or at any rate supple, Count Witte, and installed in the premiership in his place Peter Stolypin, the Governor of Saratov. The dissolution of the Duma was greeted by mutinies in the ever-revolutionary navy at Kronstadt and at Sveborg in Finland. Lenin, though he did not greatly care whether the Duma was dissolved or not, was yet involved in these risings on principle. After their suppression he took up the editorship of the Bolshevik paper, the *Proletariat*.

By the end of the year preparations were well ahead for the election of a second Duma, and the Mensheviks were anxious to continue in the election campaign that co-operation with the Cadets and the anti-Government groups which had been inaugurated at Viborg. Lenin and the Bolsheviks were opposed. A Conference of the Social-Democratic party, nominally re-united, was held at Helsingfors in November, and an all-Russian conference of all the opposition parties at Tammerfors. At both of them Lenin played an obstructive part, opposing plans for co-operation with the Cadets, or even indeed any genuine co-operation with the Mensheviks.

In January the elections to the second Duma took place.

They showed a slight reaction towards the Right. In place of the 100 seats, which the Left had obtained in the previous year, there were now thirty-five social revolutionaries and thirty-four social-democrats. As the social-democrats fought the election as a pretendedly united party, it was difficult to know exactly how many of these social-democrats were Menshevik and how many Bolshevik. They were, it seems, about half and half, but Lenin, now as ever, was not greatly concerned whether the Bolsheviks were exactly a majority or not. He cared for quality rather than quantity, and his policy was to collect the dozen or so members on whom he could count and make certain that they would act always in strict obedience.

However, before it had been possible to work out any very elaborate technique of parliamentary tactics, Lenin had to go abroad in May to take part in the fifth Revolutionary Social-Democratic Labour Party Congress in London. That congress revealed what was to him a disturbing development. Hitherto the battle of social-democratic politics had been the battle between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, the battle to see which of them could most effectively pack the Congress and obtain majorities for their resolutions. But at this congress 336 delegates presented themselves. Of them 105 called themselves Bolsheviks, 97 Mensheviks, but the rest were divided among a variety of Lettish, Polish and Jewish national organizations, or even defiantly proclaimed themselves as social-democrats and Marxians without prefix or suffix and refused to admit the discipline either of Mensheviks or Bolsheviks. It was clear that these 130 unattached members completely held the balance between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks and that Martov and Lenin with their personal squabbles had been trying too high the patience of their fellow revolutionaries, who were by no means minded to have their lives endangered by such unnecessary divisions and who were beginning to cry "A plague on both your houses." Lenin, so far from being

accepted as the high priest of orthodoxy, found himself, to his astonishment, rated as an incurable quarrel-maker and told that he must either behave himself or get out.

It was Lenin's wisdom, the secret perhaps of his success, that he knew when to retreat. Victory for the *terti gaudentes* was most probable if only a leader could be found for the faction that was to end faction. And such a leader had been found—one whom Lenin had the astuteness to recognize as his most dangerous rival—the Jew, Trotsky. They had first met five years before when Trotsky, having just escaped from Siberia, had made his way to London and called on Lenin there at five o'clock in the morning. In spite of this unpromising beginning a friendship of a sort sprang up between them and they used to visit the Zoo together. However in the *Iskra* controversy Trotsky took sides with Plekhanov. In 1905 Trotsky had headed the St. Petersburg soviet and had afterwards been sent to Tobolsk in Siberia. Thence he had a second time escaped. Now, like a Mr. Baldwin of the barricades, he stood out as "above the fighting factions."<sup>14</sup> "A windbag,"<sup>15</sup> Lenin called him in his anger—"vulgar and despicable. Trotsky does not hesitate to tell the Germans . . . that both factions are falling to pieces and that he alone, Trotsky, is saving the situation. . . . The length to which Trotsky will go in degrading the party and exalting himself. . . . Trotsky represents only his own faction. It is outrageous that Martov and Trotsky lie and write libels with impunity under the guise of scientific articles."<sup>16</sup> Yet Lenin was wise enough to know when he had met a man, and here was a man to be hated indeed but to be regarded.

Lenin saw that the time had come when for a while the most useful of activities was inactivity. It would be a false move to arouse further personal opposition by prominence. It was easier to allow the situation to develop of itself, until, as he was confident that it would, its development proved

<sup>14</sup> Letter 152.

<sup>15</sup> *Works*, vol. III, p. 35.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* vol. III, p. 515 ff.

to his fellow revolutionaries that they needed him. Therefore after the Conference he returned to Russia and set himself down to the quiet and scholarly work of translating the letters of Marx to Kugelmann and Sorge. No Marxian could complain that he was not thus working for the cause; no Marxian could complain either that he was sowing dissension among the brethren. He wrote to his mother from Stirsudden in Finland on 27 June-10 July.<sup>17</sup> "I have returned feeling terribly tired. I am quite rested now. I am having a wonderful rest; bathing, walks, no people, nothing to do. No people and nothing to do is the best for me. . . I embrace you warmly."

The day before Stolypin in St. Petersburg, being still in possession of some of the French money which Witte had collected for the Government, had dissolved the second Duma, which he found no more to his taste than the first, and arrested all the social-democratic members on whom he could lay his hands. The explosion of a bomb in his country house, in which the life of his favourite daughter had been endangered, did not incline him to look kindly on essays in constitutional government. Lenin would probably have been arrested, too, had he not been in Finland. Stolypin then promulgated a new law under which the third Duma was to be elected. The representation of the non-Russian nationalities was drastically reduced. At the same time the franchise regulations were altered in a conservative direction. Previously 42 per cent of the deputies had been elected by the peasants, 4 per cent by workers, 22 per cent by the middle class of the cities and 32 per cent by big landowners. Now the peasants were to choose only 22 per cent, the workers only 2 per cent, the middle class 26 per cent and the landowners the other 50 per cent. With such a franchise it was very clear that Bolsheviks could have no hope of obtaining any important representation in the Duma, and the argument in favour

<sup>17</sup> Letter 145.

of abstention from elections was greatly strengthened. Such a policy was urged by Lenin's old colleague, Bogdanov, at an all-Russian Congress which was held to consider the question and of which Lenin was elected president. Bogdanov received vigorous support from a young Jew of the name of Rosenfeld, who had assumed for himself the name of Kamenev and attached himself vigorously to Lenin, under his protection was to rise high and, as all the world knows, to fall low again under the rule of Lenin's successor. There was however opposition to the proposal from Lenin and others, and the matter was left for the moment undecided.

In August Lenin went abroad again to Stuttgart to attend the Congress of the Second International there, and the part which he had played in recent Russian revolutionary politics was recognized by his election to the International Socialist Bureau. On his return he went to live at Kuokkala, in Finland, where Bogdanov and other friends shared the house of himself and his wife and where he hoped that he would be safe from the police. In October in a letter to his mother he spoke of himself as settled there for the winter. However the Government's policy was now one of vigour and repression, and Stolypin was not the man to refrain from laying an enemy by the heels because of any pedantic scruples concerning an immunity on Finnish soil for Russian crimes. Lenin had published a series of articles, entitled *Twelve Years*, giving the Marxian interpretation of recent Russian history. These articles were discovered and confiscated by the police, and his friends advised him to go while the going was good, even as he in similar circumstances had given similar advice to Gusev two years before. He took the advice and fled by private boat to Sweden, almost drowning himself as he made his way out to the island where it was moored over the insecure ice. "Oh, what a silly way to have to die," he said,<sup>18</sup> as he felt the ice cracking beneath his feet, but he managed to scramble

<sup>18</sup> Fox, *Lenin*, p. 149

to land. From Stockholm he went to Berlin and thence to Geneva—"a sordid hole," he wrote,<sup>19</sup> "but it cannot be helped." "I feel as if I had come here to lie down in my grave," his wife records him to have exclaimed in a moment of profound pessimism.<sup>20</sup> At the same time the Central Committee decided to transfer abroad all its activities and the production of its newspaper, the *Proletariat*, which was to be placed under the editorship of Lenin, Bogdanov and a third exile, Dubrovinsky, whom Lenin nicknamed the Monk and whom he spoke of as "a very good colleague among the Russian Bolsheviks."

It was of course always a great problem to know where to find the money either for the necessities of life of the exiled professional revolutionary or for his newspapers or other activities. The Bolsheviks thought that they had for the moment solved their problem in an original, if not wholly unexceptionable, way. The head of the Bolshevik organization at the Caucasus at this time was a certain Georgian, named Djugasvili, whom later generations were to come to know under the more easily pronounceable title of Stalin. This Djugasvili had a lieutenant, an Armenian, of the name of Ter-Petrosian. On 10-23 June 1907, Ter-Petrosian, acting under the orders of Djugasvili who was not himself present, bombed the main street, the Pushkin Street, of the great city of Tiflis. The street was wrecked, innocent citizens to an uncertain number were left dead and wounded about the place but in the confusion Ter-Petrosian was able to make off with 250,000 roubles of the Tiflis State Bank which was at that time being transported along the street. He took the money to Stalin, who was able to get it out of the country with the notion that it should be used to finance the exiled Bolsheviks. However neither Stalin nor his fellow-Bolsheviks seem to have remembered that bank-notes have numbers, and therefore, when the Tiflis notes were presented for changing in Berlin,

<sup>19</sup> Letter 147

<sup>20</sup> Fox, *Lenin*, p. 145.



Munich, Stockholm and Geneva, the holders of them, Litvinov among others, were arrested. The possession of them therefore came to be rather an embarrassment than an asset. Whether Lenin himself ever handled any of this money is uncertain, but his reference to "the panic caused by the arrest of the 17" in a letter to Alexinsky, written<sup>21</sup> in January 1908, certainly seems to show that he was at any rate connected with plans for their circulation. In any event the arrests left the Bolsheviks depleted both in personnel and in funds.

As for Ter-Petrosian, he escaped the police but was subsequently killed by being knocked off his bicycle by a motor-car.

The social-democrats showed their wisdom in leaving the country, for the social revolutionaries who remained behind were vigorously persecuted, their organization broken up and a blow dealt to them from which they never recovered. Up till then they had always been slightly stronger than the social-democrats, and it is an arguable paradox that Stolypin by his persecution of them in these early months of 1908 made certain that the subsequent Russian Revolution would be Marxian. In any event with the social-democrats in exile and the social revolutionaries in gaol the task for reaction in Russia was an easy one, and Stolypin took the opportunity to break up all workmen's organizations, and indeed organizations of professional men and cultural organizations, too, to ban publications, to reduce wages and lengthen the hours of labour. The constructive balance to the repressive policy was a certain encouragement given to the establishment of peasant proprietors, with the hope of thus forming a strong body of landed "kulak" peasants, devoted to the preservation of the regime. The policy was professedly one of "compulsory purchase." But as Lenin pertinently asked, "Who will

<sup>21</sup> Letter 148.

compel?"<sup>23</sup> A government dominated by the landed interest, by those who had no wish for the policy to succeed. For it was only the minority of the governing class that had come to see that they must give up something, if they were not to lose all.

<sup>23</sup> *Works*, vol. III, p. 187.

## CHAPTER V

### THE REVOLT AGAINST RELIGION

LENIN in exile at Geneva had occupied himself in the early months of 1908 in writing an article on *Agrarian Questions in Russia at the End of the Nineteenth Century* for Granat's *Encyclopædia*. His attention was however soon diverted from that by a peculiar but most important controversy. He had made the acquaintance in London of Maxim Gorky, then living in a self-imposed exile on the island of Capri, and Gorky wrote to him during his first months abroad, when Bogdanov was strongly objecting to Geneva as a headquarters, to suggest that they all come to Capri to live. Lenin was tempted. He wrote back<sup>1</sup> in January in a mood of rare concession to things of the flesh. "It is amazingly tempting, damn it, to come to you to Capri. You have described it so well that I swear I will certainly come, and I will try to bring my wife with me. Only I do not know when. . . . It will take a month or two at least. But it must be done. But by the spring we shall come to drink white Capri wine, to look at Naples and to talk with you." However business, as always, before pleasure. The *Proletariat* and the smuggling of it into Russia was the business of the moment. The outwitting of authorities now, *consule Stolypin*, was a task far more difficult than it had been in the old days before 1905. "Emigrant life," Lenin was to write a year or two later to Gorky, "is now a hundred times more difficult than it was before the Revolution of 1905." Gorky had offered to do anything that he could to help the *Proletariat*, so Lenin in reply asked him to get in touch with the secretary of the seamen's union of a

<sup>1</sup> Letter 149.

line which plied between Italy and Russia and arrange with him an underground railway by which copies of the *Proletariat* could be taken thus to Russia and deposited there with an Italian innkeeper in Odessa. "He must find us a reliable man," and, he added in brackets, "Are Italians reliable?"<sup>2</sup>

Yet Gorky, besides offering practical services and also his pen to the *Proletariat*, had also certain questions to raise, disturbing to him and as disturbing to Lenin. Was not the ruthlessly pragmatical policy which Lenin was imposing one that would allow but little place to creative art and by consequence in its victory would in a very important respect stunt the life of the community in which it triumphed? The true answer was doubtless in the affirmative. Like many men of a mathematical bent, Lenin was susceptible to music. "I know nothing more beautiful than the 'Appassionata,'" he said to Gorky of Beethoven.<sup>3</sup> "I could hear it every day. It is marvellous, unearthly music. Every time I hear these notes, I think with pride and perhaps childlike *naïveté* that it is wonderful what man can accomplish. But I cannot listen to music often, it affects my nerves. I want to say amiable stupidities and stroke the heads of the people who can create such beauty in a filthy hell. But to-day is not the time to stroke people's heads; to-day hands descend to split skulls open, split them open ruthlessly, although opposition to all violence is our ultimate ideal—it is a hellishly hard task." Yet in the other arts he was limited. In literature he looked only to the economic argument and boasted to Gorky that he had never written any poetry in his life. His later flatterers, praising his every quality as if they were Disraelis praising their Queen Victorias, have sought to depict him as a Leonardo of all the talents, but the picture is a most false one, as anybody who has tried to read his prose must agree. Yet he would not admit—probably even to himself—the

<sup>2</sup> Letter 149.

<sup>3</sup> Fulop-Miller, *Mind and Face of Bolshevism*, p. 176.

justice of Gorky's accusation of lack of sympathy with art. "Of course I was not dreaming of persecuting the intelligentsia as the stupid little syndicalists do, or to deny its necessity for the workers' movement."<sup>4</sup>

There was another issue. In addition to the political division of the social-democrats between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks there were also growing up among them philosophical divisions. Some revolutionaries had fallen under the somewhat confused influence of the Austrian physicist and psychologist Mach, who propounded a theory which admitted a vaguely spiritual interpretation of the universe. In opposition to such theories Lenin remained, he confessed, a "rank Marxist."<sup>5</sup> But his prime concern was with political tactics. In political tactics there must be complete unity and discipline; on philosophy the party as such must remain neutral. The split between Machists and Marxists did not at all correspond to the split between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. There were Bolsheviks and Mensheviks on both sides in the philosophical quarrel.

Gorky, who at first seemed to be almost neutral in the philosophical quarrel, suggested with the intention of composing it that he should act as the chairman over a conference between Lenin and Bogdanov and the other leading Machists. Lenin at first was quite inclined to agree, but, when Bogdanov and his school produced a symposium entitled *The Studies of the Philosophy of Marxism*, Lenin discovered to his horror that their error was far deeper than he had understood. The Machists were actually guilty of language which admitted the possibility of some validity in the concepts of religion. One of them, Bazarov, he found, had written that "faith" in the reality of the external world was "mysticism." Bogdanov was slipping into Kantianism. Lunacharsky spoke of "religious atheism" and the "adoration" of the higher human personalities. There were other things almost too shocking to repeat.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Letter 152.

<sup>5</sup> Letter 153.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

In the middle of all that arrived an article from Gorky which seemed to show that even he was very far from trustworthy. Indeed Gorky was, from Lenin's standpoint, very far from trustworthy. Gorky was a creative artist who loved to play with ideas. In his famous interview with Alexander Blok he sketched out a view of the universe not so very different from that of Mach and even confessed that "he has no reason to consider Lammenais' point of view on that question less convincing than all the others." "I prefer to image man as a machine," he confessed, "which transmutes in itself the so-called 'dead matter' into a psychical energy and will, in some far-away future, and transforms the whole world into a purely psychical one."

"I do not understand," objected Blok. "This is pan-psychism, isn't it?"

"No," said Gorky. "For at that time nothing will exist except thought. Everything will disappear, being transmuted into pure thought which alone will exist, incarnating the entire mind of humanity from the first flashes of it until the last moment of its last explosion."

"I do not understand," Blok replied again (as well he might), and Gorky then "proposed that he should picture to himself the world in an uninterrupted process of dissociation of matter. Matter, dissolving, continually gives off such species of energy as light, electricity, electro-magnetic waves, Hertzian waves, etc. To these are added, of course, all signs of radio-activity. Thought is the result of the dissociation of the atoms of the brain; the brain is composed of the elements of 'dead' inorganic matter. In the brain substance of man this matter is uninterruptedly transformed into psychical matter. I myself believe that at some future time all matter absorbed by man shall be transmuted by him and his brain into a sole energy—a psychical one. This energy shall discover harmony in itself and sink into self-contemplation—in a meditation over all the infinitely varied creative possibilities concealed in it."

What exactly all this amounted to, no one could exactly say—least of all Gorky himself. For he was no systematic thinker. But Lenin, who watched his fellow revolutionaries, as Browning's monk in the 'Spanish Cloister' watched his fellow-religious, was right from his standpoint to be suspicious. Into such a mind anything might come creeping—even God. While not exactly believing in God, did not Gorky often mention His name without any distinguishing abusive epithet? Was he not to write "I am pleased to remember that the laws issuing from laboratories do not always coincide with the laws of the universe"?

Gorky tried hard to be an orthodox atheist, but with him, as with Johnson's lawyer friend, "cheerfulness was always breaking in." He could not help making jokes about science. "They say that a learned American has invented a machine," he wrote concerning an enthusiastic fellow-revolutionary, "a wonderfully simple one, just a telescope, a wheel and a handle. You turn the handle and you can see everything; analysis, trigonometry, criticism, in fact the whole meaning of the world's history. The machine shows you all this—and whistles as well." "What I like about that machine is the fact that it whistles," commented Gorky, as one who possessed the culture of tradition. It was not surprising that such a man in his last decadence should babble of green fields and should speak of "that cultural, indeed, that religious importance of labour, which joins all the world into one," and of "fairlylike, heroic life." Nor was it surprising that such a man, for all his admiration for Bolshevik Russia, should yet prefer to live in Fascist Italy.

Lenin himself had an excellent sense of humour. But he saw very clearly and rightly that the Revolution would never be won, if jokes were permitted. They destroyed fanaticism; they created content. And about God there can be no compromise—not even the compromise of jesting. The quality of mercy is not strained. It droppeth—it is

its primal curse—as the gentle rain from Heaven, and is an attribute to God Himself. Once admit the possibility of God's existence, and you will find yourself, as Deborin, Lenin's commentator, complained, passing "unduly indulgent judgments." The cursed Christian doctrine of the equality of Man led to the fearful heresy that bourgeois and worker shared a common Father and were redeemed in a suffering that was atonement for the sins of both.

Lenin was not a free-thinker; he did not profess to be. He was a dogmatic atheist, so fixed in his dogma that he refused even to discuss the question, "What is the use of unnecessarily straining one's nerves?" he wrote, when Gorky renewed<sup>8</sup> the invitation of Capri and after he had come fully to understand Gorky's dangerous position. "A long journey, ending in an inevitable quarrel." And, when he learnt that Bogdanov and Lunacharsky were staying with Gorky, he put his refusal even more bluntly.<sup>9</sup> "It would be both harmful and useless for me to come to you; I cannot and will not talk with people who have begun to advocate combining scientific socialism with religion." And as all the world was flocking from him to God, he added in a pathetic postscript the hope that at any rate Gorky's mistress had not abandoned her atheist faith. "Good wishes to M. F. She does not stand for God, does she?"

Yet how repulsive was the thought! He could not keep off it, and, picking up his pen, wrote again to Gorky. "A Catholic priest who violates young girls is much less dangerous to 'democracy' than are priests who do not wear surplices, priests without vulgar religion, ideological and democratic priests, who preach the creating and making of little gods."<sup>10</sup>

What was the cause of Lenin's so extraordinary fanaticism? His upbringing was not dogmatically atheist. His father was, it seems, a nominal conformist to the Orthodox faith; he could not have held the positions which he did hold

<sup>7</sup> Marcu, *Lenin*, p. 179.

<sup>8</sup> Letter 155.

<sup>9</sup> Letter 156.

<sup>10</sup> Fulop-Miller, *Mind and Face of Bolshevism*, p. 73.



under the Government had he not been. His mother does not seem in later years to have been in any way at issue with her son, but she had at any rate sufficient relic of faith to put a cross over the tomb of her dead daughter, and Lenin, it will be remembered, was able in his youth to speak quite calmly of that cross. Why was it that in later years there grew upon him this great rage in which he was unable to hear of anybody speaking of belief in God without cries of uncontrollable fury?

It is common and natural enough that the revolutionary against established State should be revolutionary also against established Church. It is not unnatural, that the revolutionary, when attacking the officers of an established Church because they have not done enough to relieve social evils, should attack them by challenging their title-deeds, by asking whether theirs is really the Church that Christ founded. Therefore revolutionaries have often adopted some protestant religious position, claiming that theirs is the true gospel of Christ and that the established Church, which professed Him, had betrayed Him. Such a position is intelligible. Other revolutionaries have found the root of error in the belief that Christ was God at all—a belief which, according to their contention, has turned men's minds to "theology" and "dogma" and the things of the next world and away from Christ's real teaching, which was a gospel of social reform. Such a position is less easy to defend, but it has been widely held.

But, whatever the degree of anti-clericalism which the conduct of the clergy might justify, evil conduct of the clergy could in no way disprove the existence of God. It might prove that the clergy were no sure interpreters of the Will of God, but it could not prove that God had not got a will. And therefore the revolutionaries of history up till modern times have not been atheists, and, whether they have accepted the Divinity of Christ or not, have at least been almost at one in contending that Christ was on their side,

that theirs was the true Gospel. Of such a sort were the Albigenians, or Luther, or Cromwell, or Robespierre, or Tolstoy, and a strange variety of opinions have the revolutionaries throughout the ages twisted out of the gospel words in their anxiety to claim Christ as their champion. Thus the great Russian revolutionary poet, Alexander Blok, in his weird but gigantic poem, *The Twelve*, throws before us the picture of twelve Red Guards marching through the cold and wind-swept streets of Petrograd on a winter night. Suddenly they notice that a thirteenth figure has formed itself out of the snow and set itself at their head. It is the figure of Christ. In writing thus Blok was writing in the age-old revolutionary tradition, but it was a tradition, as was soon shown to him, unacceptable to the world of Lenin. For Lenin was not merely a revolutionary but a revolutionary in revolt against the revolutionary tradition. Religion, to his master, Marx, had been the "opium of the people," and to Lenin it was "a kind of spiritual cocaine in which the slaves of capital drown their human perception and their demands for any life worthy of a human being."<sup>11</sup>

By the important years of his life he was, it is true, somewhat unbalanced. But there was a chain of logic of a sort which had led him to his conclusion. Roughly his mental development seems to have had two stages. Firstly, during the early years—the years in Russia and in exile—he was a revolutionary in the normal sense—that is to say, he thought that it would be for the good of mankind that the Government should be overthrown and a communist regime substituted for it. Then the adventures of life threw him into contact with the exiled revolutionaries, and he found in the revolutionaries much the same weaknesses of human nature as he had found in the Tsarist officers. He despaired of achieving communism with such instruments, but so fanatical was he by now in his communism, that his conclusion from that discovery was not to abandon com-

<sup>11</sup> Fulop-Miller, *Mind and Face of Bolshevism*, p. 78.

munism but to demand instead the creation of a new sort of man, the Bolshevik, collective Man, who, innocent of individuality, could be happy under the communist system. As Herr Fulop-Miller truly says, "Bolshevism aims at more than the confiscation of private property; it is trying to confiscate human dignity."<sup>12</sup>

Strange as such an ambition may seem to the Western mind, yet, as readers of Dostoevsky will remember, it was far from original in the Russian revolutionary tradition. In *The Possessed* Dostoevsky sketched out the extraordinary creed of Shigalevism—the system of socialist slavery, where "all are slaves and equal in their slavery." And the same creed is put into the mouth of the Grand Inquisitor—a purely Russian figure who has no relation to the historical inquisition of the West—in the *Brothers Karamazov*. Ordinary men, says Shigalev's friend of Shigalevism, "must entirely renounce all personality and become, so to speak, a herd in order through absolute obedience by a series of regenerations to regain their natural innocence." Neither Shigalev nor the Inquisitor doubted that, by depriving man of freedom, they were rendering him the greatest service. "They will all be happy," said the Inquisitor, "all the millions, except the hundred thousand who rule over them. For we alone, we who guard the mystery, we alone shall be unhappy. There will be thousands of millions of happy children, and only a hundred thousand martyrs, who have taken on themselves the curse of the knowledge of good and evil."<sup>13</sup>

Why should such a faith, strange as it may be, involve a dogmatic and intolerant atheism? The answer, I fancy, is this. Many of the Bolshevik leaders were Jews and, because Lenin was not a Jew, he is often contrasted with his colleagues and spoken of as a Russian, a European. Yet he certainly was not at all a European. It is debatable how far any Russians can properly be called Europeans,

<sup>12</sup> Fulop-Miller, *Mind and Face of Bolshevism*, p. 284.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, Epilogue.

but in any event Lenin quite certainly was not even a Russian in the ordinary sense of the word. He came from a district which is to the geographer just within the borders of Europe but one where the population is predominantly Mongol. In spite of the centuries of pressure of the Orthodox faith the Mohammedan religion was still powerful in Kazan. We do not know very much concerning Lenin's ancestry, but it is only necessary to look at his pictures to see that he was by blood, predominantly at any rate, a Mongol, an Asiatic. He therefore approached the problems of life with no native bias in favour of the European traditions and, though in his years of exile he was to live much in Western Europe, yet he mixed but little with any general society there. He never came to any understanding of the Western countries and, as has been already noted and as will in future be seen, was often at grotesque fault in his judgment of Western developments. What little he knew of the West he knew not at all through men but through books.

Now even among books it was only in a very small corner of the great corpus of European literature that he was at home. Zola and Jack London are the only non-Russian general writers from whom he quotes with any frequency. In this he was at most striking contrast with Trotsky. Lenin knew but two schools of European thought—the conventional nineteenth-century liberalism and the conventional communist reaction to it. In the liberal philosophy he found pregnant the presumption that Man was sufficient to himself—that men only needed to be left alone and they could get along very well and all would turn out for the best. Against this easy optimism he rightly reacted. He had seen both the Tsarist officials and his fellow-revolutionaries and he knew that neither of them were of the stuff that was capable, unaided, of building the good society. In this judgment he was of course at one with Christian tradition. He had stumbled on the discovery of original sin and, when he demanded that the old man be

put away and a new man be substituted for him, he was, little though he guessed it, talking language perilously near to that of St. Paul and of the great Christian fathers. For the Christian Church agrees with Lenin that man must be born again and it is Her claim that, through the operation of Grace, such a rebirth is possible. It was his fault that he thought of the liberal philosophy against which he was in warfare as the established conservative philosophy. He did not understand that between the medieval and the modern societies had been not merely that change in the personalities of the exploiters on which the Marxist theory of history insisted, but also a fundamental change in the concept of the nature of man. Liberalism and capitalism were by their insistence on Man's self sufficiency and their denial of original sin, themselves in revolt against tradition. What was needed was not a revolution against tradition but a reaction towards tradition.

All differences of opinion, as Cardinal Manning truly said, are at bottom theological. And, shocked though he would have been if he had guessed it, there is no doubt that a specifically religious influence also played its part in the forming of Lenin's mind. Marx held a philosophy of economic determinism, according to which the one motive for conduct was greed and the logical conclusion of which should have been a conclusion of complete despair. Yet the apocalyptic faith of generations of pious Jewish ancestors caused him illegitimately to proclaim a rosy dawn and the coming transformation of human nature under the influence of communism. Lenin lacked that Jewish tradition. Yet he too had, as Gorky said, "a burning faith that suffering is not an essential and unavoidable part of life but an abomination which people ought and are able to sweep away."<sup>14</sup> Brave words, but what are we to say of them, in our present dispensation, but that they are sentimentalities? The remedy for a particular disease can be discovered,

<sup>14</sup> Fox, *Lenin*, p. 155.

but suffering is unavoidable, however loud the rhetoric with which it is denounced, and the people cannot sweep it away. Can communism conquer death?

Yet it was not an originality in Russia to believe in the coming of a new dispensation on earth, whence the abomination of suffering would truly have vanished.

In Russia common persecution had thrown together rebels against the Church and rebels against the State, and the latter had borrowed from the former doctrines which their principles gave them no right to borrow. There had always been common among the Russian sectaries, such as the Skoptsy and the Khlysty, as among the wilder English sectaries of the seventeenth century, a chiliastic belief in a Kingdom of God that was to come on earth. Strange practices as of flagellation or mutilation were the qualifications for the enjoyment of that kingdom, and the sectaries comforted themselves in their present tribulation by the thought that the careless majority, which laughed at their rites, was to be excluded from the kingdom that was to come.<sup>15</sup> There can be no doubt that Lenin's vision of the coming reign of the communists derived from the vision of such sects as the Khlysty on the coming reign of the saints on earth as well as from the economic studies of Karl Marx.

It was mainly with this philosophical controversy that Lenin was occupied throughout 1908. In face of Stolypin's vigorous repression the times were not propitious for practical revolution. Bogdanov, Lunacharsky and Bazarov were his three main opponents, and his great fear was that they would use the philosophical difference in order to split off and form a new political faction. With that common revolutionary love for clumsy names he christened his opponents the empirio-critics.

In the month of August he seems to have made a short trip to London, but for the greater part of the summer he was at his home in Geneva. There was a meeting there

<sup>15</sup> Fulop-Miller, *Mind and Face of Bolshevism*, chap. iv.

during August of the Plenum of the Central Committee of the somewhat nominally re-united party. The Mensheviks proposed to strip the Central Committee of any authoritative power and to turn it into a mere information bureau. Lenin was temperamentally opposed and obtained the rejection of the proposal by Bolshevik votes. But there remained the ugly truth that, with their divisions as they were, any attempt to exercise any real discipline, however highly the necessity for it might be praised, would in practice only succeed in splitting the party. Such a split could only have one of two effects. Either it would render permanently futile the whole social-democratic movement, or the scattered fragments would find *their* re-union, after the elimination of the fractious leaders, under the headship of Trotsky, the one man of first ability who had kept himself free from all the factions and who now in the *Pravda*, of which he was editor, was clamouring for unity at the price of an abandonment both of old quarrels and—what was perhaps more important—also of old quarrellers.

In October Lenin attended a meeting of the International Socialist Bureau in Brussels. It was after that that he and his wife decided to make the move from Geneva, which they had never liked, to Paris, and they had settled down before the end of the year in a little flat in the "south suburbs of that city near the Park Montsouris."<sup>16</sup> They were delighted with the flat. For Lenin, who yielded only to M. Léon Daudet in his dislike of Geneva, was delighted to be out of the "provincial backwater" where "the climate is usually damp and the fogs are unpleasant."

In December and January there was an All-Russian Congress of the Social-Democratic Party in Paris. It registered a victory for the policy to which Lenin was now compelled as the only hope of keeping the party united—that is to say, a delegation of extreme authority in theory to a Central Committee, combined with measures to see

that in practice they did not exercise their authority. A resolution to liquidate the existing social-democratic organizations was voted down. All authority was vested in a small council entitled the Five for Russia. On the other hand the all-important practical question whether social-democrats should or should not take part in the Duma was evaded. The Mensheviks, whom Lenin called Liquidators of the Right, were for participation, the Liquidators of the Left, or Otzovists, were for immediate withdrawal. Lenin stood between them and saw to it that the issue was evaded.

Meanwhile he was editing the *Proletarian* and in the intervals pushing on with his work on the philosophical foundations of Marxism and the errors of Lunacharsky and his friends. *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* was its title. But, as authors have so often found, it was one thing to write a book; it was quite another to find a publisher. It was the common opinion at this time, even in revolutionary circles, that he was an impossibly tiresome young man, and he was in the end only able to find a publisher by accepting an extremely disadvantageous contract and by agreeing to liberal emendations in his abusive language. He had to agree to a postponement of any payment until there were actual profits on the book, so that, as he said, the publisher would take absolutely no risk (although it is not clear how the publisher was guarded against the risk of there never being any profits at all even without the payment of a royalty). He had also to "agree to qualify the swearing, also the indecent expressions. 'I invented God' will have to be altered to 'I have invented for myself' . . . well, shall we say mildly 'religious conceptions' or something of the sort."<sup>17</sup> Such qualifications considerably reduced the volume of the book.

The year 1909 did not dawn auspiciously for Russian revolutionaries. On the one hand within Russia itself the reaction under Stolypin's iron hand seemed to be meeting



with all success. In the factories labour unrest seemed for the moment to have been effectually stamped out. In the country the policy of establishing the peasant as proprietor of his land seemed to be creating a strong peasantry, opposed to revolution—exactly the opposite of what the socialists wanted. The exiles in Geneva or Paris, themselves nervous wrecks, received every day the calls of men, yet more hopelessly wrecked than they, who had been newly driven into exile, for whom charity and the cause demanded provision but who were long past earning for themselves or indeed behaving with gratitude or even tolerable decency to those who helped them. It is a comfortable sentimentality to say that persecution steals the soul and brings out the noblest in a man. Sometimes perhaps it does, and those who are fortunate enough to meet the sharp stroke of martyrdom early on in life may die heroically. But it is the satanic curse of a sustained persecution that it robs both persecutor and sufferer of a proper manhood. Nerves are not strong enough to stand it, more particularly the nerves of those who have no notion to look in suffering for a purgative purpose. And all but the strongest of those who staggered out from Stolypin's Russia came out from it but half-men.

None but a fanatic could look on such beings as the exiled revolutionaries and still keep his faith in Man—his faith that unaided Man was competent to solve his problems. Emigrant life, Lenin confided to Gorky, was "scum." "Even to observe it is nauseating."<sup>18</sup> But there were other and deeper minds who made a less fantastic diagnosis of the disease than his. In March of that year appeared the publication, *Vekhi*, or *Signposts*. The contributors to it were all writers who had but recently been in the revolutionary ranks—Struve, for whom Lenin had written in his Siberian days—Bulgakov, whom he had even then suspected, and a third, M. Berdyaev, who was to give in our time perhaps the clearest of all published pictures of the communist mind

<sup>18</sup> Fox, *Lenin*, p. 146.

both in its strength and in its weakness. Struve was already travelling the road which was to lead him back to conservatism, Bulgakov was soon fully to reaccept the Christian theory and to end his days as a priest of the Orthodox Church. M. Berdyaev's position is well known to all. It was the root contention of these thinkers that Man's loss of belief in himself was a necessary consequence of his loss of belief in God. Despair was the inevitable consequence of presumption. Man, in himself and by himself, did not deserve an act of faith. The traditional philosophy was able to believe in Man not because of his own merits but because it believed in God, and such a faith forbade despair in the Man whom God made in His own image. "These are they for whom their Omnipotent Creator did not disdain to die."<sup>19</sup> Who are we to despise what Christ loved? But, without Christ and without God, what reason is there to love a world of sadistic floggers and poor, nerve-wrecked, cringing backbiters? For a time in Europe's aristocratic day it was perhaps possible to avert the eye from the gaol and the slum, and, looking only to the proud Renaissance Prince, to the magnificent artist, a Raleigh or a Leonardo, to the comfortably and kindly gentleman, to persuade oneself into a Swinburnian faith that Man was "the master of things." The savage indignation of a Swift might scream at us to look beneath the clothes to the reality, but Swifts were fortunately but few and far between. And a world that did not wish to be disturbed could always avoid such men by incarcerating them in a mad-house. But one day the aristocratic state, the state of the self-sufficient man, must collapse, and it was then, in the presence of the reality of revolution, that men must make their choice between the alternatives—that of utter despair or of the return to God. Trivial mock-faiths were neither here nor there.

To Lenin of course such language was unspeakable. It was worse even than Lunacharsky and Gorky, for these

<sup>19</sup> Chesterton, *Judgment of Dr. Johnson*

men not only used religious metaphors but they even held religious claims to be true—professed their belief in all sorts of extraordinary historical events that were not capable of an economic explanation at all. Yet he was undaunted. If Man is not suited for communism, he had already decided, so much the worse for Man; we must change him. Now he added to that rider—it was an easy addition—that, if history did not agree with the communist interpretation of it, then we must change history. Marx had already demanded that history be rewritten. But the emphasis of Marx's demand was subtly different from that of Lenin. When Marx demanded that history books tell of the economic struggle rather than of the adventures of kings and queens, he could defend himself with the plea that the economic struggle was important and the kings and queens unimportant. It was a position that could honestly be held and contained much truth. But, when Lenin demanded that the history books cease to tell of Jesus Christ, he could not plead that the life of Jesus Christ was unimportant. Whether Christ was God or Man or myth, whether His claims were true or false, no one could pretend that the history of the world had not been greatly influenced by His claims. It is the teaching of economic determinism that Man cannot act save for an economic motive, and therefore it is essential for the economic determinist not merely to argue that religion is false but to conceal the fact that people have ever acted from non-economic religious motives. It was not sufficient to denounce religion; it was necessary to deny it.

Lenin, as soon as his *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* was finished, turned himself to vigorous writing against *Vekh*. Yet the revolutionary cause was now in a sad way. There was the arch-apostasy of the "mystics," as with characteristic mixture of pedantry and inaccuracy the Marxians insisted on calling all who believed in God. Then there was the quarrel with the Mensheviks. But even beyond that the meeting of the Soviet of the party in May revealed bitter,

and apparently hopeless, divisions within the Bolshevik group itself. The only effect of Lenin's attempt to build a bridge between the Otzovists and the Mensheviks in the previous year was to make the Otzovists and Ultimacists, as they sometimes called themselves, profoundly suspicious of Lenin himself. To their mind he compromised just where he should have stood fast and stood fast just where he should have compromised. These men, a literary group, Bogdanov, Lunacharsky, Gorky and Alexinsky, were anti-religious enough to satisfy any normal taste but they had no sympathy with Lenin's inquisitorial mind, which insisted on scanning every sentence and phrase, to whom no comma was so unimportant but that it might contain some subtle recognition of the possibility of compromise concerning God's existence and who suspected the phrases of everyday life because he found in them metaphorically religious meanings, terrified lest, like Blake with a grain of sand, he might catch God lurking in some apparently harmless semi-colon. On the other hand in practical politics the Otzovists were at the moment in favour of a less compromising policy than that of Lenin. For they demanded the withdrawal of the Bolshevik members from the Duma and its boycott, and to this Lenin was opposed. They pitched an Achilles' tent on Capri, an excellent place to sulk in, and retired there to form a party school, as they called it.

The only comfort to the Bolsheviks was that the Mensheviks were all but as deeply divided as they. They had launched a paper called the *Voice of Social-Democracy*, the editorship of which was in the hands of a board on which sat, among others, the veteran Plekhanov and Axelrod, of the old exiles and *Iskra*, and Martov, the Menshevik leader in the controversies with Lenin at the time of the split in the groups. But now Plekhanov, the old leader, and Martov, the new leader, had themselves fallen out. Plekhanov thought that Lenin's assumption of a middle position should be reciprocated and that an attempt should be made to

effect a genuine reunion of all social-democrats and to work with Lenin. But, as sometimes happens in a period of division and confusion, the group that demands the abolition of faction becomes in turn no more than one more faction. Martov, in whom feelings of personal ambition seem to have played some part, thought of himself as possessing definite rights as the recognized leader of the Mensheviks; he liked to be a leader and he was by no means ready to consent to a rearrangement under which he would be deprived of a leadership. Indeed Russian revolutionary life was coming to resemble nothing so much as that golden era under the rule of the benevolent and egalitarian king of whom Gilbert sings in the *Gondoliers*, where one found

“Party leaders in each street  
Maintaining with no little heat  
Their various opinions.”

Over it all there hung the sardonic and Hebraic figure of Trotsky, churning out his endless and most excellently written editorials in *Pravda*, refusing to commit himself to any of the groups, ploughing his lonely and sinister furrow.

In November Lenin was at Brussels again to attend a meeting of the International Socialist Bureau, and then in December he made a further effort at reconciliation by going to Capri to lecture to the Party School there. While his nerves made him intensely quarrelsome, his realistic commonsense taught him the suicidal folly of unnecessary quarrels. Therefore, while at one time or another Lenin indulged in unpardonable and most vitriolic abuse of almost all his fellow revolutionaries, such quarrels were never final. A second thought always told him that the quarrel was a folly and he was ready to ask, if not forgiveness, at least forgetfulness, of what he had said and to open negotiations for a reconciliation. And, since his charm, when he was charming, was as striking as his abuse when he was abusive,

such negotiations were often successful. Perhaps such violently oscillating relations are less uncommon among Russians than among other people, for Russians live in extremes.

The visit to Capri was a success. The news from Russia, where the reaction was still vigorous and apparently successful, where both revolutionary and ordinary workers' organizations were being ruthlessly broken up by Stolypin's iron policy, convinced any revolutionary not quite dead to reality that the cause was lost if they could not heal their own divisions. Plekhanov saw this; so did Bogdanov; so did Lenin. They were able to persuade all the different groups of the Social-Democratic party to send delegates to what they called a unity Plenum of the party, which met in Paris from the middle of January until the early days of February 1910. At that Plenum six groups of social-democrats were recognized—two Bolshevik, the Bogdanov Bolsheviks, or Otzovists, and Leninite Bolsheviks—two Menshevik, the Plekhanov Mensheviks and Martov Mensheviks—the Trotskyites and the Bundites. The Bundite claimed to be representatives of the Jewish social-democrats, although there were of course plenty of Jews in all the other revolutionary groups and their claim to speak on behalf of the Jews had been rejected. It was a preliminary tactical triumph for Plekhanov, Bogdanov and Lenin to have induced Trotsky to take his seat with them as a leader of one of the factions and to abandon the astute pose of a creature above faction.

Before the menace of extinction agreement was necessary. The agreement was as follows. There were to be two recognized social-democratic papers, the *Proletariat*, which was Bolshevik, and the *Voice of Social-Democracy*, which was Menshevik. All authority was to be vested in a new Central Committee of Seven, resident in Russia. Above the two factional papers was to be a central party organ, which was to avoid all matters in controversy between Bolsheviks

and Mensheviks. It was to be called the *Social-Democrat* and to have a supplement called the *Discussional Leaflet*, in which members could air their views. Lenin was to serve on its board. All existing organizations of whatever group were to be permitted to continue in existence but were to submit themselves to the authority of the central Seven. Trotsky agreed henceforth to work in loyal harmony with the other social-democrats and, as token of his abandonment of the lonely furrow, accepted as colleague Rosenfeld, or Kamenev, Lenin's creature—"a young literary man," Lenin called him.<sup>20</sup>

All apparently was well, but revolutionary experience proved again and again that it was a great deal easier to make such agreements than to keep them. Trotsky was far too astute and far too arrogant a man ever to accept permanently an arrangement which placed him only on an equality with other revolutionaries. Martov was quite convinced that the whole policy of revolution was futile and intended to use the agreement merely as a means for leading the whole Social-Democratic party to the Right and back into legal courses. Neither intended loyally to abide by the spirit of the agreement, nor, as we can see from his letters, did Lenin. The unforgivable "mysticism" of the Capri school had shocked him deeply, and it was clearly his real purpose and expectation to move away from the contaminated company and reform the old alliance with Plekhanov, with whom he now found himself to have more in common than with any of the other revolutionaries of equal standing with himself. The Plekhanov Mensheviks and the Lenin Bolsheviks could, he thought, together form a central bloc against which neither Martov of the Right nor Bogdanov of the Left would be powerful to act. The situation was not unlike that of the European powers under the Spanish non-intervention agreement. No one was anxious to push matters to an open breach of the agreement,

<sup>20</sup> Letter 150.

and, short of open breach, each was anxious to steal all the marches on the others that might be possible. So, after the signature of the agreement in February, we find Lenin writing to Plekhanov in March,<sup>11</sup> calling him "dear and much respected comrade" and pleading for "the need of a close and sincere union between all true social-democratic elements in the struggle against Liquidators and Otzovism." It was but six weeks since he had signed his pact of amity *with* Liquidators and Otzovism and not long before that that he had been denouncing Plekhanov for not being a "true social-democrat." Now he was anxious to come to San Remo where Plekhanov was living in order that they might have a talk about "the position of affairs."

The meeting does not seem to have immediately taken place, and in the next months he was travelling about Europe—in July at Pornic in the Loire country, in August in Italy *en route* for Capri, whence he wrote to his mother from Naples, then by the end of that month in Copenhagen for the Congress of the Second International, where he had his meeting with Plekhanov who was also a delegate and was elected to the Co-operative Commission, then to Sweden for what proved to be his last meeting with his mother (for she died before his return to Russia) and by the end of the month back again in Paris. Then in November a lecture-tour in Switzerland. He wrote to Shklovsky,<sup>12</sup> a friend of his in Berne, to explain what was in his mind. "As for the Plekhanov bloc, I think you are quite right; we must be on the side of the bloc. Since 1907 I have been standing *completely* for a rapprochement with the Plekhanovites. And now still more so. Only with the Plekhanovites can we and must we build up the party—it is high time for us to give up hoping to agree with the Vperedovites"—that is Bogdanov, Gorky and Lunacharsky—"and the Liquidators. It is a mistake to think that the Plekhanovites are weak cyphers (as is sometimes said), etc. That is an impres-

<sup>11</sup> Letter 169<sup>12</sup> Letter 176



sion abroad. I am deeply convinced that the Menshevik workers in Russia are nine-tenths Plekhanovites. The whole history of Menshevism in the Revolution vouches for the fact that Plekhanovism is the best product (and therefore the most vital) from the proletarian source of the Mensheviks. . . . Trotsky has openly moved towards the Liquidators, to the support of the *Golos* people, to breaking the party bloc of the Bolsheviks and Plekhanovites." (*Golos*, or *Voice*, was an anti-Plekhanov Menshevik paper.) " . . . Plekhanov and I fully agree that we cannot do anything about Trotsky. We will either organize a popular newspaper together with the Central Organ or *separately* from the group of Bolsheviks." Meanwhile the Bolsheviks launched two new papers—*Zvezda*, or the *Star*, in St. Petersburg, and *Mysl*, or *Thought*, in Moscow. "This is what makes me happy," Lenin wrote<sup>23</sup> to his brother-in-law, Mark. " . . . It is very consoling." He founded also the *Rabochaya Gazeta*, or *Workers' Gazette*.

In any event preservation of unity within the party in such an atmosphere would not have been easy and the Seven had no enviable task. But, whatever the chances of success that they may ever have possessed, such chances were quite destroyed by Stolypin when a police raid found them all in session and bundled them all off together to prison. The principle of unity was thus destroyed.

The truth of the matter was that, when it came to the tug-of-war, Martov was the strongest of the factional leaders. And, if Trotsky should go over to him, then Martov and Trotsky together, the Liquidators as Lenin called them, were stronger than Plekhanov and Lenin, whatever Bogdanov and the Bundites might do. The facts seemed to be eloquent against a policy of revolution. Martov could point out that in 1905 there had been 1,424,328 participants in political and 1,438,841 in economic strikes, as against 3,777 and 42,846 in 1910.<sup>24</sup> And indeed Lenin himself was under no illusion of the possibility of revolution so long as international

<sup>23</sup> Letter 177.

<sup>24</sup> Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, vol. I, p. 63.

war was avoided. His comfort was in the steady deterioration of the international situation, from which he derived good hope that a European war was on its way—a European war in which the Tsarist regime and, as he thought, the other regimes of Europe must certainly perish. He was particularly comforted by the development of internal Russian politics. The accidents of diplomacy had thrown Russia into alliance with France and into an entente with Great Britain and into opposition to the Imperial powers of Germany and Austria-Hungary. This friendship with democratic powers caused the liberal Cadet party in the Duma to support Russian foreign policy more warmly than was their general custom. And Lenin was delighted to see their enthusiasm. To him of course the differences between one form of capitalist state and another were completely indifferent; one form of exploitation was found more convenient to the capitalists of one country and another in another, and he recognized no superiority at all in Western democracy over Eastern autocracy. He was only glad to feel certain that, when the war came, the Cadets would support it, because the social-democrats would be unique in their opposition and, when the whole war effort collapsed, as he was convinced that it would, the Cadets would be discredited by that collapse and the social-democrats would be its beneficiaries.

In all this his foresight was to be substantially justified, and, granted his end, he was probably right in arguing that the Liquidators were making a fatal mistake in seeking to align themselves with the regime only because the immediate prospects for revolution were not rosy. The war would come all right; it was not necessary to despair. He could wait.

He could wait, and we must remind ourselves in estimating this strange character just what waiting meant to him. To the normal man the ghoulish, delighted waiting for the catastrophe of civilization in which millions are to perish

is repulsive, and we do right to find it repulsive. Yet we must remember that he was serving a cause, however strange, and that through his twisted soul strands of callousness and of tenderness criss-crossed against one another in an odd and incomprehensible mixture. Through it all there still beat strong his domestic affections. "Please do not send me any money," he was writing<sup>28</sup> to his mother during these months. "I do not need any at present. . . . My position is not any worse *now*; I am not in need. And I beg you, my darling, not to send anything and not to economize out of your pension. If things become more difficult, I shall write frankly, but that is not the case now . . . I *continue* to receive the same salary about which I spoke to you in Stockholm. So please do not worry. . . . I embrace you, my darling, and wish you good health."

However, to the business. Finding that after the arrest of the Seven in Russia authority was passing into the hands of the bureau of the Central Committee abroad, in which Martov's group was in the majority, Lenin in May broke off all relations with it and demanded a conference of the full Committee. This conference met in Paris and called for a re-organization of the bureau and a new all-Russian party Congress. The Martovites refused the demand, and thus the reformed unity was shattered and the party split once more, the new alignment differing from the old only in that Plekhanov and his followers now stood with Lenin instead of with Martov.

It was of vital importance for the Bolsheviks to capture the allegiance of the Russian exiles. Therefore in the summer they held a school for workers who had come from Russia at Longjumeau, a suburb of Paris. Lenin lectured on Karl Marx, the agrarian problem in the socialist state and other kindred subjects. After the summer school he went off in September to attend the International Socialist Bureau at Zurich, and to deliver some lectures in Zurich and

<sup>28</sup> Letter 178.

Geneva on Stolypin and the Revolution. He combined pleasure with business, for we find him in a letter to his mother telling her how he had climbed Mount Pilatus.

Since the Otzovists stood still further to the Left than Lenin on the acceptance of the present regime, it was natural that on the issue between Lenin and the Liquidators of the Right, they should support Lenin and one effect of Lenin's quarrel with Martov was to heal the breach between him and Gorky, Bogdanov and Lunacharsky. This was fortunate for him, since the Capri group, not formidable in numbers, was strong in literary talent and, if there was to be a warfare of the pen between Left and Right, their friendship would be of importance. Such a warfare seemed likely—indeed was already raging. For, while Lenin was lecturing at Longjumeau, Martov had been composing a vitriolic pamphlet against the new Left, called *Saviours or Destroyers*. He had sent this pamphlet to the leading foreign socialists, such as Karl Kautsky and Clara Zetkin, with the hope of course that they would recognize the Mensheviks as the true upholders of the apostolic tradition and the Bolsheviks as the heretics. There was some danger that he might succeed, for Kautsky had been heard to say that Lenin's conduct had been "revolting" and Zetkin that it had been "dirty."<sup>26</sup> Kautsky's opinion in particular was important, for he had been the friend of Engels and was generally accepted as the authoritative living interpreter of the minds of Engels and Marx. He was a friend, too, of Plekhanov, who was much more of a cosmopolitan and more sensitive to non-Russian opinion than Lenin. There was a danger that if Kautsky should declare for Martov, Plekhanov might revert to his side. Although he had but recently formed an alliance with Plekhanov, yet Lenin did not trust him. "We are in a thorough mess so far as party matters are concerned," he wrote to Gorky, "... Plekhanov is wriggling."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Letter 180

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*

In any event it was clearly of the first importance that Martov should be answered. The most effective policy would be to get an answer from one of the Capri school, who were the ablest and most widely known among socialist writers and who had also been no party to the personal quarrel between Lenin and Martov. Unfortunately the Capri school, while sympathizing with Lenin against Martov on this quarrel of principle, was by no means warm in its feelings towards some of the *arriviste* young men in the group by which Lenin was surrounded. It was the Capri school's interpretation of Lenin's quarrel with themselves that these young *arrivistes* had hitched their wagons to Lenin's star and then, finding that influence in the party was in the hands of men greatly their senior and superior in ability, had played on Lenin's fanatical atheism to push him into an unnecessary quarrel so as to break his friendly relations with all save those of their own inconspicuous calibre. Kamenev, the new star, was for this cause particularly detestable in the eyes of Maxim Gorky. Lenin therefore struck on the notion of getting Kamenev to write the history of the split from the Leninist point of view in a pamphlet entitled the *Two Parties*, to which Lenin contributed a preface. His hope was that this pamphlet would serve as an answer to Martov before Kautsky and the world and would also dispel some of the prejudices against Kamenev from Gorky's mind. "I hope it will dispel certain prejudices which you evidently hold against the author," he wrote to Gorky.<sup>11</sup> The prejudices dispelled, he then hoped to be able to enlist Gorky's powerful pen for a second bombardment such as might finally annihilate Martov. He had hopes, for Gorky had plans for starting periodicals of his own and had also half-promised to contribute to Lenin's *Zvezda*.

<sup>11</sup> Letter 180

## CHAPTER VI

### THE COMING OF WAR

IN November of 1911 it looked for a moment as though the situation might be changed, when news came through of the assassination of Stolypin. He was shot dead by a Jew called Morda Bogrov in a theatre in Kiev in the presence of the Imperial family, and it was widely rumoured that the police were privy, having allowed Bogrov to use these means to free them from the authority of an unpleasantly vigorous superior. In any event it was soon evident that the assassination of an individual was an act as futile as it had ever been. There was no general disintegration of the State. A new government was established in power without difficulty, pledged to a continuance of Stolypin's repressive policy and armed with a further excuse for such a policy. The courtier Goremykin was in no way an improvement on Stolypin, who had at least balanced repression with construction, and it was from now onwards that the absurd and sinister influence of Rasputin began to be felt. Lenin was from the first under no illusion. Here was no opportunity for revolt. They must have patience and not waste precious energy on isolated and futile acts of violence. The war would surely come. In December he collected a conference of all the Bolshevik groups abroad, and, haranguing it, denounced the futility of the Menshevik policy of acceptance of the regime and bade them bide their time.

In January there was a conference in Prague of all the party workers. It was the last occasion on which even a pretence was made that there was a single social-democratic

party. The pretence could not survive their meeting in the same room, and there was a definite breach between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. Such a breach Lenin had intended and it was no disappointment to him. His only disappointment was that he failed to detach the Plekhanov faction from the Mensheviks. Plekhanov, who had hovered between the two, threw in his lot, when a final decision was demanded, with Martov.

Lenin returned, tired and disgusted, to Paris. If we may judge from his letters to his mother, he turned first to nature for his recreation. "It is almost spring here. About a week ago I cleaned up my bicycle and went out to the Bois de Verrières (Manyasha has been there) and I brought back with me some willow catkins. I went again to-day with Nadya—the cherry blossom is already out. The weather is springlike but unreliable; much rain,"<sup>1</sup> and again a few weeks later,<sup>2</sup> "I believe spring is early here this year. The other day I again went a bicycle ride into the forest. All the fruit trees in the gardens are in white blossom (as though milk had been poured over them) the perfume was wonderful. How delightful spring is."

"Loveliest of trees, the cherry now  
Is hung with bloom along the bough  
And stands about the woodland wide  
Wearing white for Eastertide."<sup>3</sup>

And one who has seen spring come down upon the lovely land of France can well understand Lenin's wonder whether any cause is dear enough to be worth breaking with such beauty. Yet Paris was a most uncomfortable place for Lenin just then. Every prospect pleased, but Man was quite extraordinarily vile. The greater number of the Russian exiles in Paris were Menshevik, and, while the cherry blossom was peeping out along the road to Verrières, to welcome this strangest and most restless of all its wor-

<sup>1</sup> Letter 182.    <sup>2</sup> Letter 184.    <sup>3</sup> A. E. Housman, *Shropshire Lad*, vol. II.

shippers, the devouring Trotsky was organizing in Paris itself a Congress of all Lenin's enemies. Plekhanov and his followers, Trotsky and his followers, the Jews of the Bund, Bogdanov and Lunacharsky of the *Vpered* group, Lenin's fellow editors on the *Social-Democrat* and Martov with his Mensheviks—all met together in Paris in March and passed resolutions refusing to recognize the decisions of the Prague Conference. Paris was certainly unpleasant for Lenin and might even be dangerous. "There is so much squabbling going on among our people and such mud slinging as has not happened for a long time. . . . Matters literally reached fighting pitch at the local meetings."<sup>4</sup> He hoped at first to be able to escape from it all by going out to Fontenay, but in the end decided that the only policy was to move to another part of the world altogether. With the summer therefore he and his wife moved from Paris to Cracow.

There was another reason for moving to Cracow. Though the murder of Stolypin had not led to a collapse of the Tsarist state, yet, whether for that or for other reasons, 1912 had seen a considerable recrudescence of labour troubles. In particular there was a strike in the Lena gold-fields in Siberia, in which the troops turned out and shot down literally hundreds of strikers. A wave of indignation spread over the country. Then again, with the Balkan troubles, there was just a chance of the hoped-for European war. Lenin did not think it likely; he judged that the time was not yet ripe, but it was well to be near the frontier to be ready. Of the two hostile countries which, as frontiers then ran, bordered on Russia, Austria, the freer and more easy-going, was preferable to Germany, and in Cracow he was peculiarly safe. For the Austrians, sharing the same religion with the Poles, were much more popular with them than either of the other two nations who had seized their territories. They therefore had hopes, which were to be largely justified, that, if war should come, the Russian

<sup>4</sup> Letter 182.



Poles would flock to their standards, and so they rather encouraged than otherwise the concentration of Polish *émigrés* from Russia at Cracow. To be sure, the revolution which Lenin was plotting was a very different one from that of Polish nationalism, but police officers, when once they have received the surprising instructions to encourage revolutionaries, are not clever at distinguishing one revolutionary from another, and Lenin was able to live unsurveyed himself, while his friends passed freely to and fro across the frontiers, losing themselves among the multitudinous Poles.

The Bolsheviks had succeeded in transforming their weekly *Zvezda* into a daily *Pravda*. They were, as their name implied, the majority. Yet, with Martov, Plekhanov and Trotsky against him, Lenin's team was woefully inferior in ability to that of the Mensheviks. His only ally of the first calibre was Gorky, and even of Gorky he could not be quite sure. For Gorky differed from other revolutionaries in that he alone was not what we may call a "whole-time revolutionary." The others had no other life nor interest. They were certain to continue in the movement whether on the one side or the other, for they had nowhere else to go. But with Gorky there was always a possibility that, if his fellow revolutionaries should become too tiresome, he would abandon the movement altogether and take himself to literary society. He was an amateur revolutionary; they were professionals.

He was now threatening to do this. "You are all wranglers," he had written to Lenin in a not unjustified protest, to which Lenin had no better answer than the abusive epithets "bourgeois" and "petty."<sup>8</sup> Gorky asked why the social-democrats were not able to treat one another with that reasonable charity which was found among members of other political parties. The true answer was, of course, that their peculiar life had turned them into irresponsible nervous wrecks, but the answer which Lenin gave was to

detail all the internal squabbles of the social revolutionaries, the Cadets and other groups. Nevertheless he was compelled to admit that their quarrels had not been as bitter as those of the social-democrats, and he gave a characteristic explanation of that. All the other groups were enemies of the one, inevitable, Marxian truth. Their differences were superficial in contrast with the great counter-revolutionary principle which they had in common, and therefore it was natural enough that, as the Marxian challenge became more patent, they should heal differences and coalesce in their resistance to the truth. But among Marxians coalition must be bitter simply because Marxism was truth. It mattered little if a man was faithful or was traitor to what was in any event error. When the standard was the standard of truth, treason could not be in any way tolerated. Lenin sneered at "the sleek emptiness and poverty" of all other political programmes. "The difference between the social-democrats," he wrote, "and all of them is that the wrangling has invested the social-democrats in their group struggle with *deep* and clear ideological roots, while their wrangling is externally smoothed over, but inwardly is empty, petty and mean."<sup>6</sup>

Gorky however was not convinced. What were "these deep and clear ideological roots?" he asked. It was precisely his complaint that he could not find any clear principles round which controversies raged and that the leaders helped him so little with clear definitions of the issues. "You leaders have not written one single clear book or single large pamphlet. . . . The result of this is: there are very many good young people in Russia, but they are so incensed against people abroad." Your conduct "dissuades the workers from participating in the conference."

Lenin could only answer that discontent was growing in Russia.<sup>7</sup> "Things are brewing in the Baltic Fleet." The answer was not *à propos*. Gorky did not deny that the

<sup>6</sup> Letter 186.

<sup>7</sup> Letter 187.

workers were turning away from the Tsar; what he questioned was whether they were turning to the social-democrats. And indeed the whole argument between Gorky and Lenin was at cross-purposes. So utterly convinced was Lenin that Marxism was the truth that he thought it sufficient to prove his opponents heretical and he had thereby proved himself orthodox. Gorky's suggestion was that the whole lot of them were somewhat tiresome. However it did not come to a breach. Gorky "is less unfriendly to us than before,"<sup>a</sup> was the somewhat tepid report which Lenin was able to give to his sister in the autumn after the correspondence had concluded.

In June of this year the Government, alarmed by the recrudescence of strikes, had introduced a scheme of compulsory state insurance, based on the model of Bismarckian Germany. The notion behind it was that the Russian working-man was an improvident creature. Even when he got good wages he did not save, and, as a result, when illness or unemployment came, he was faced with extreme poverty, and in that poverty fell a ready victim to the agitator. If he were compelled to save by the compulsory levy on him and in return given maintenance in time of sickness and unemployment, he would escape, it was hoped, from the temptations of utter destitution and also be reluctant to overthrow a state from which he received benefits in favour of another state at whose hands he might not do so well. But the concessions, if concessions we may call them, were made too late to allay discontent. The Russian workman did not want to be compelled to save, and either did not notice that he stood eventually to receive something for the money that was taken from him, or else did not trust the Government to pay the benefits that it was promising. The scheme added to, rather than allayed, discontent and was freely used by the social-democrats as a means of arousing hostility to the Government.

If war or the Revolution should come, Trotsky had no mind to allow Lenin to steal a march on him by being closer to the scene of action. Therefore Trotsky and the Mensheviks, hard on Lenin's heels, reassembled in Vienna in August that conference which had met in Paris the previous March. Lenin denounced them in a long pamphlet exposing the condition of the social-democratic movement, as he interpreted it, and denouncing all Liquidators and compromisers, who, in their folly would become involved with the evil thing at the very moment when its collapse was approaching. The alternative policy which he advocated was to participate in the elections to the Fourth Duma, which were then taking place, to denounce the electoral system as unfair to the workers but nevertheless to obtain as much representation in it as possible. The Bolshevik group, which was elected to the Duma, should then use its membership for advertising purposes and to obstruct any constructive policy which the regime might attempt to put through.

In accordance with this policy, six Bolshevik deputies were elected to the Duma in the autumn of this year, and sat in the Duma up till almost its final abolition, professedly obedient to Lenin's orders. There were also eight Mensheviks, including one Polish socialist. The Bolsheviks were elected by large working-class constituencies; the Mensheviks came from the Caucasus and other outlying districts. The achievement of the Bolsheviks was one of singular futility and they in no way helped towards the consummation of revolution. Nor indeed was this surprising. For their leader, Roman Malinovsky, took advantage of his position to sell himself to the Russian secret police, and the plans of the Bolsheviks were consistently betrayed by him to the authorities. Lenin naturally had no suspicion of this, and it is somewhat amusing to note that Malinovsky was almost the only one of his fellow-revolutionaries, in whom he had complete confidence. "For the first time among our people

in the Duma there is an outstanding worker leader (Malinovsky)," he wrote.<sup>9</sup> "He will read a declaration. He is not another Alexinsky. And the results will be *great*, although they may not be so at once." It was only after the Revolution that the discovery of documents in the Ministry of the Interior proved the treason, which by then had already been suspected, and Lenin, of course, had him shot.

The career of Malinovsky is interesting. In the first place it showed that a man high in the Bolshevik counsels had, as late as 1912, no serious expectation that there ever would be a revolution. The revolutionaries, most people thought at that date, like the poor, we would have always with us. There would be revolutionaries—professional revolutionaries, plying their permanent profession—but there would never be a revolution. Here Lenin was wiser than his contemporaries. But in his insensitiveness to the inevitable effect of a parliamentary atmosphere he was less wise than, for instance, Bogdanov. He had lived all his life in revolutionary milieu and he did not at all understand how nearly impossible it is to preserve a completely fanatical faith, when one has dealings every day with people who honestly do not believe that salvation lies along the revolutionary road at all. It is almost impossible, sooner or later, not to ask oneself whether there is not perhaps something to be said on the other side. Malinovsky asked himself the question, and from the vision of the rival parties reached the cynical conclusion that there was no great truth in any of them and he might as well therefore feather his own nest. But even had Malinovsky been of a finer type, it is unlikely that he could have sat for years in the Duma and remained the instrument that Lenin wanted. To pitchfork a man out of the horrible, subterranean life of nervous plotting into the comfortable club-existence of a parliamentary society was to subject him to a temptation that it was beyond human nature to bear. In fact it is not,

<sup>9</sup> Letter 194.

I think, too bitter a cynicism to say that, if Malinovsky had been an honest man, the only difference would have been that it would not have been necessary to bribe him. He would then have moved to the Right from conviction instead of from corruption. Lenin was always ready with a lecture to show how the opinions of mankind at large were the consequence of circumstances. But Bolsheviks, too, were liable to suffer from this disease of circumstance.

Plekhanov, swinging right away from Lenin, had now begun to preach co-operation not only with Martov but with the social revolutionaries, who were agrarians and not socialists at all. At the International Socialist Bureau in Basle in October of this year he announced his belief that the day was not far distant when unity would be re-established not only among social-democrats but even between social-democrats and social revolutionaries. Meanwhile the Mensheviks refused to co-operate in the strikes which Lenin through Stalin was trying to arrange in St. Petersburg with the demands of a republic, an eight-hour day and the confiscation of land. "The Liquidators are now leading an attack *against* revolutionary strikes. That is where they have got to." Lenin wrote to Gorky<sup>10</sup> in a letter, half of disgust, half of triumph, to prove to him that they were in truth traitors and that the quarrel with them was by no means one of faction. "The insolence of the Liquidators . . . is unparalleled," he wrote to Stalin.<sup>11</sup> ". . . The articles in *Luch*"—the Menshevik paper—"are the depth of baseness." "Those swine,"<sup>12</sup> he called them in a letter to Shklovsky. And, for all his claims to the possession of a majority, he was far from happy. The only approximation to a true test of the relative strengths of the two groups was that of the circulation of their newspapers. This test seemed superficially a satisfactory one for the Bolsheviks. For the Bolshevik *Pravda* had a circulation of about 23,000 to 8-9,000 for the Menshevik *Luch*. But the truth was, as he

<sup>10</sup> Letter 195.

<sup>11</sup> Letter 192.

<sup>12</sup> Letter 194.

confessed in a letter to Shklovsky,<sup>13</sup> far less comfortable. For *Pravda's* circulation in April and May had been 60,000 and it had dropped from that with a bump to the 23,000 in the summer. "As long as we go to sleep and the Liquidators work, their cause will progress." "Is anything being done about collecting money for *Pravda*? I do not see that this is being done, whereas the Liquidators have reports in *Luch* about their collections of funds abroad. But *Pravda* is very, very greatly in need of money." "We are swimming against the current," he confessed to Gorky. "... We have now to fight against a large number of also-revolutionaries for revolution among the masses. . . . Undoubtedly there is a revolutionary spirit among the masses, the workers, but a new democratic intelligentsia (among the workers) with a revolutionary ideology is growing slowly, lagging behind and has not yet caught up."

These were the months when Sir Edward Grey was hard at work trying to find Balkan frontiers that would satisfy both the victorious Balkan allies and the Great Powers. There were constant rumours of the breakdown of the conference and the coming of war, and it was Lenin's fear that war would come, the old order collapse and Marxism not yet be ready to step into its place. However he did not think that there would be immediate war and in that of course he proved right. "There is much talk about war here, as can also be seen in the newspapers," he wrote<sup>14</sup> to his sister, "... but I do not believe that there will be a war," and to Gorky,<sup>15</sup> "There will probably not be a war and we shall stay here for the time being, taking advantage of the Poles' desperate hatred of Tsardom."

There was no war at the end of 1912, but in Russia the old year went out to a troubled tune of gigantic strikes, threatening always to break forth into civil war. At the time of the New Year the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks was in session at Cracow to decide what advantage

<sup>13</sup> Letter 194.

<sup>14</sup> Letter 191.

<sup>15</sup> Letter 195.

might be taken of the Government's difficulties. As the world drew towards the catastrophe of 1914 and communism's opportunity, it is interesting to see who were of the fold and who of the outer darkness. The greatest name in Bolshevik history after Lenin's—that of Trotsky—was of course still the name of an anathematized enemy. Lunacharsky, to whom the party was afterwards to owe its largest claim to the possession of a cultural contribution, was also of the enemy. Of the true fold there were Lenin and his faithful wife, Krupskaya, alas, now far from well, sickening with the goitre, Apfelbaum-Zinoviev, to become from henceforth Lenin's closest associate, Stalin, from Georgia, who was working himself into favour by obsequious service to Lenin, Kamenev, Zinoviev's colleague, who was not at this particular meeting, Petrovsky, who had provided Lenin with books in the old days and whom he employed to keep quiet the social-democrats of other countries, who threatened to sue Russian social-democrats for money that they had lent them, Troyanovsky and Rozmirovitch, *émigrés* who had represented the party at the International Socialist Congress at Basle and were brought thence to be hauled over the coals for not having shown a firm enough front to the Mensheviks, and others, including Malinovsky, the Tsarist creature, who betrayed all their secrets to the Government.

There was one important decision which they were called on to make. The Government was proposing, in honour of the tercentenary of the rule of the Romanov family, to offer a large amnesty to its opponents. There was to be an unconditional amnesty for writers, under which Gorky would have been able to return to Russia—not that he particularly wanted to—and the Bolshevik deputies were to be allowed back into the Duma on condition that they took a "solemn promise" of fidelity to the regime.<sup>14</sup> The Central Committee easily decided that they should take such a promise. Whatever men may have done in practice,

<sup>14</sup> Letter 196.



there has survived through the Christian centuries, a notion that it is better to keep promises than to break them. This notion of honour the Marxians did not merely violate in practice, but they rejected it in theory. Honour was a bourgeois prejudice; there was no ultimate cause above that of the class war, and, if a lie would serve the purposes of the war, a lie must unhesitatingly be told. Their enemies such as Herr Hitler,<sup>17</sup> it must be confessed, have preached very much the same ethics in the cause of extreme nationalism.

Lenin had another trouble besides those of politics—that of his wife's goitre. Cracow was low-lying and damp, and he thought, probably rightly, that its climate was partly responsible for her illness. Therefore in May he took a villa—"enormous (far too big)"<sup>18</sup>—for the summer in the village of Poronin, up in the Tatra Mountains some 120 miles to the south of Cracow. It was further from the Russian frontier, and there was of course no coming and going there—both of which were political disadvantages. "The country," he wrote to his sister, "is magnificent here. The air is excellent—altitude about 700 metres. . . . The people are Polish peasants, *gurali* (mountain folk), with whom I talk in an incredibly broken language of which I know five words, and the rest are Russian words which I alter. . . . The village almost a Russian type. Thatched roofs and poverty. The women and children barefoot. The men go about wearing the '*gurali*' costume—white cloth trousers and white cloth half-cloaks, half-jackets. . . . We get up early and go to bed almost at the same time as the cocks and hens. Each day we go to the post and to the railway-station, but unfortunately, I feel Nadya's illness has become worse as a result of the removal. I may have to take her to Berne to be cured." And about the same time he was writing to Gorky,<sup>19</sup> "My wife is ill with goitre. Nerves! And my nerves also are playing tricks with me."

The visit to Switzerland, which he was fearing, proved

<sup>17</sup> e.g. in *Mein Kampf*.

<sup>18</sup> Letter 197.

<sup>19</sup> Letter 198.

necessary—long before even the lease of the house ran out, and he had to take Krupskaya to Berne in July. Gorky in a slight illness had gone to a Bolshevik doctor, but Lenin was horrified at such folly. "In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred 'comrade' doctors are asses. . . . It is terrible to allow a Bolshevik to try his experiments on you." Lenin had no mind to be guilty of any such folly with his own wife, and his wisdom was justified. By the end of July he was able to write from Berne to his mother,<sup>20</sup> "At last on Wednesday (after two weeks' preparation) they operated on Nadya in the clinic. The operation evidently went off successfully, for yesterday she already looked fairly well and began to drink with pleasure. The operation was apparently rather difficult; for about three hours they tortured her without an anæsthetic, but she bore it heroically. On Thursday she was very ill—a high temperature and delirium—and I was thoroughly alarmed. Yesterday, however, things were obviously better, no temperature, the pulse better, etc." And in the next month, August, he and Krupskaya were back again in Cracow, having taken the opportunity of his wife's convalescence to give some lectures in Switzerland and to address a conference of the organizations of the Social-Democratic party on the party situation.

There had been two developments of the party situation during Krupskaya's illness, which had gladdened him. First, the Bolsheviks had won a triumph in the election of officers for the Union of Metal Workers, carrying thirteen seats to two for the Mensheviks. Second, there had been a split in the *Vpered* group between Gorky on the one hand and Lunacharsky and Bogdanov on the other. As for the Metal Workers' Union it was difficult to know exactly how much it proved. The precise philosophical differences between Bolshevik and Menshevik were probably not clear to most of the Bolshevik and Menshevik leaders themselves; they were certainly not clear to the ordinary Russian

<sup>20</sup> Letter 520.

working man, and, when he voted at his union elections, he had little understanding whether he was voting for a Bolshevik or a Menshevik or what such terms meant. He voted mainly on personal grounds or for those other vague reasons (God knows what they may be) for which electors all over the world do give their votes. The election therefore did not mean that thirteen-fifteenths of the metal workers were Bolshevik. Yet it was a straw in the wind and, as such, encouraging to the Bolsheviks and discouraging to the Mensheviks.

The quarrel in the *Vpered* group was more important. For Lenin could not afford to do without Gorky's support, and, even had he been able to do so, would have been uncomfortable in a quarrel with him. It was therefore a pleasure to Lenin to hear that Gorky had quarrelled with Lunacharsky and Bogdanov and to be able to make to his friend the old anti-religious gibes without any fear that Gorky would gibe back. Lunacharsky had written a little feuilleton called *Fear and Hope* at the end of 1912, in which he had ventured to question the orthodox Marxian atheism, pitting against it a mid-Victorian agnosticism of the era of Matthew Arnold and bidding his readers very faintly to trust the larger hope. "And your Lunacharsky is a fine fellow," wrote Lenin<sup>21</sup> to Gorky concerning this effort. "Oh, a very fine fellow. So he says, Maeterlinck is a 'scientific mystic.' Or are Lunacharsky and Bogdanov no longer yours?"

Shortly before he had to leave Switzerland Lenin was planning to hold a summer school at Poronin, to which both Bolsheviks and Mensheviks were to come. And, as the Mensheviks would only come if there were a Menshevik speaker, forgetful of past differences, he wrote to Plekhanov quite a civil letter, explaining to him the plan and offering to pay his expenses if he would come from Geneva to address the conference. It is not easy to see what purpose

<sup>21</sup> Letter 198.

the conference could have served, nor did it in fact take place.

Instead there did take place, on Lenin's return to Galicia, a meeting of the Bolshevik deputies to the Duma, other Russian workers and the most prominent *émigré* members of the party. The meeting itself was held at the village of Dunaets in Galicia. But it was preceded by a preliminary and very secret meeting of the party's inner cabinet—secret both from the rest of the party and, as Lenin fondly imagined, from the authorities. At that meeting there were present Lenin and his wife, his two most intimate creatures, Zinoviev and Kamenev, and Malinovsky. Stalin was not admitted to *these deliberations*. The secret policy having been formulated, the rest of the autumn was filled with conferences of workers and meetings of the Central Committee at one place and another in Galicia to which Lenin lectured and expounded his plans of preparation for the coming blow—plans which of course Malinovsky duly sold on to the authorities. At about the same time a new Bolshevik paper, *Nash Pat*, or *Our Path*, was making its appearance in Moscow. On 24 October–6 November the Central Committee announced the final breach of the Bolshevik minority from the majority of Menshevik deputies in the Duma. The Bolsheviks had many grievances against the Mensheviks, of which it was not the least that, while the Bolsheviks called themselves the majority, yet the Mensheviks had succeeded in returning the more members to the Duma. It is always embarrassing to be in a minority—never more so than when you call yourself the majority. But, in any event, final breaches among revolutionaries are as common as farewell tours among opera singers. For years the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks had only retained relations of such a proximity as might facilitate the cutting of one another's throats and the definite formation of a Russian Social-Democratic Duma faction was not in itself of great importance.

At the end of the year Lenin's mother-in-law, to whom his domestic soul extended a solicitude equal to that of his own family, was seriously ill with influenza and his troubles with her seem, to judge from the gap in his letters, to have caused an interruption of political plotting. Thus came in the fateful year of 1914. Lenin had from the first prophesied, obedient to his Marxian principles, the inevitability of an eventual European war, but he did not foresee, any more than other people, that this would be the year of it. Rather, when face to face with a particular crisis, it was his habit to prophesy that there would not at the moment be war. So, with the spring and return of Nadya's goitre, the family returned to Poronin. The only alternative would have been to have gone west to Paris, and Paris, of which he used to be so fond, he could not now face, seething, as it was, with Trotskyites and Mensheviks. "The intrigues among the Russian colony there were incredible and our nerves went absolutely to pieces and all to no purpose." So he consoled himself for residence in this "dead-alive" town with the thought that "the weather here is magnificent at present" and that "autumn is magnificent in the Tatra." "I often go for bicycle rides," and he foresaw no immediate disturbance. "If it is fine this autumn, we shall probably stay in the country."<sup>22</sup>

There is a picture of Lenin taken in Galicia in the early months of this year. Seated in a chair, he is leaning forward with his left hand on his knee. His troubled life had left its clear mark on his features. A thick black beard completely covered the chin, but from it the great, bald, Mongol face rose up magnificent like a mountain. The right ear stuck out; the left was less protuberant and, as in all his pictures, the head was turned slightly to the left so as to conceal this small defect. But more interesting are his clothes. He had not as yet to show himself to the Russian proletariat and therefore it was not necessary to dress like a working man

<sup>22</sup> Letter 205.

as later he astutely did. Instead he effected a clerical atmosphere, as if he were subconsciously sighing after a blocked and lost vocation. Beneath the dark suit a dark jersey coming right up to the neck, which it would be easy to mistake for a stock, and above it a hard white collar such as is often worn by the lay-brothers of religious orders.

The practical task of these months was the formation of a Bolshevik policy towards the separate nationalities of the Russian Empire. Russia contained within her borders a very large variety of languages and races, and such of the Bolshevik leaders as were not Jews belonged to one or other of the subject nationalities. It was natural therefore that some Westernizers, looking to Turkey or to the Irish warfare against Great Britain, declared that the true problems were the nationalist problems and that economic problems must await their solution. Lenin's friend, Shaumyan, in Baku had written to report such talk as common in Georgia. Lenin of course did not agree with what he called "the stupidity of the cultural-national-autonomists" and instructed his friend how best "finally to quash the adherents of such idiocy."<sup>22</sup> His instructions are of some interest because they follow very closely the lines upon which the Bolsheviks, when they later came to power, did attempt to solve this problem. To Lenin the only true differences were class differences; religious, racial and national differences were in his eyes but trivialities, but, simply because they were so trivial, it was vital that men should not be distracted by them from their true task. The best way to destroy nationalist grievances was gaily to grant all nationalist demands. Make whatever temporary compromises may be necessary with traditional custom or traditional religion, for such compromises will of their nature be temporary, for the new Bolshevik man, whom we are going to produce, will have no religion and will

<sup>22</sup> Letter 207.

care nothing for tradition. In such matters as language let there be complete freedom; let each district have as its official language the language which it prefers, and let every individual within that district who prefers a different language be free to use the language of his choice. There may again be some temporary inconvenience in a multiplicity of languages, but again that inconvenience will be but temporary. For it is only because they foolishly believe that traditional cultures hold in them some especial value that people obstinately insist on speaking different languages from those of their neighbours. The Bolshevik man, aware that traditions have no virtue, will be glad to speak whatever language may be the most convenient.

It was Lenin's hope of course that with this generous, if somewhat contemptuous, concession of all their demands, he would win over to the Bolshevik cause all the dissident minorities, which, when the time came to establish their autonomous republics, would make those republics autonomous but also socialist. And so of course it has happened over by far the greater part of the Russian Empire. But he did not greatly care, as he was afterwards to prove at Brest-Litovsk, if he should be compelled to sacrifice some territory to an autonomy which would not be socialist, for, unlike the rulers of the old regime, he was indifferent to the frontiers of the new socialist state, if only it could be established somewhere, for it was his conviction that, if established in one country, it would inevitably spread thence to others.

The early months of 1914 were months of growing internal tension within Russia. Quite apart from the European situation things seemed to be moving back again to the days of 1905. In the summer there were large strikes in the textile factories in Baku and St. Petersburg, which went rambling on almost up till the war. In Russia, as in other countries, there was a race between the international and the social war, and it looked to some observers as if the social might outpace the international. Lenin however did not

think so. He wrote hard for the *Pravda* and the *Prosvescheniye* and encouraged the strikers with all his power. At the same time he did not lose his head. The war would come. Weaken the Government so that it may be incompetent when war comes, but do not attempt to overthrow it until war brings the opportunity. It would be fatal to copy the error of the social revolutionaries and waste power in the striking of futile and ineffective blows.

Meanwhile, one last fight with the Mensheviks. The split between these two groups was now definite, but the International Socialist Bureau at Brussels unfortunately only recognized one Russian Social-Democratic party. Which of the groups should have the right to send its delegates? To save themselves from embarrassment as much as for any other purpose, they summoned a unifying conference between the groups. But Lenin had had enough of such conferences. On his instructions the Bolshevik delegates went to the conference with an ultimatum in their pockets that the Central Committee be recognized as the sole governing body of Russian social-democracy and that the Menshevik centre be abolished. When this ultimatum was refused, the conference broke down.

While however it was in session there was fired at the other end of Europe at Sarajevo that shot that was to set all Europe in a blaze.

To Lenin, little though men were thinking of Lenin in those days, war was the beloved opportunity so long awaited. To him it was nothing whether archdukes were shot or whether they were not shot, and the ambitions of "Russia" or of "Germany," "France" or "England" were but the ambitions of the competing capitalists in those countries. He had no care to take sides between them, for he did not intend that any of those ambitions should be realized. Wars were to his oversimplifying mind made by capitalists and fought by workers and were but a supreme exemplification of that which was always true—that the capitalists lived by



exploiting the proletariat. They were to be welcomed because they provided an object lesson which the very simplest could not fail to see, and in the disillusion which would follow upon suffering and defeat and hope deferred, the capitalist system would collapse.

Therefore, while of course he dismissed with contempt the normal patriotic support given to their country's cause by the great majority of men and women in all the belligerent countries, he was even more contemptuous of the mere pacifism of the minority. To his mind nothing could be more disastrous than a victory for these pacifists and a restoration of a Europe more or less similar to that that existed before the Sarajevo shot. He was against war, but he was even more against peace. He was for the continuance of the national war until there should be universal revolt against it in the belligerent countries, and it would therefore be possible to transform the international into a civil war. Among non-Marxians he gave his reluctant admiration to those who were pacifists, for he saw in them the most intelligent and the most dangerous of his enemies. It was absurd, he argued, that those who wished capitalism to survive should destroy the whole cake with their quarrels about the precise size of their particular slice of it. If they knew their own business, they would rather fix up a peace on almost any terms. By a parity of reasoning his deepest loathing was reserved for those Marxians, who either supported their country or who worked for peace, for chauvinists, as he called them, and opportunists—"those who advocate the lowest and vilest forms of social chauvinism and opportunism."<sup>24</sup> Theirs was the real Judas-kiss, and he felt for them all that loathing which only a determinist can feel for those who do not do what he has announced that it is determined that they must do. "The coarsest greediness of a bourgeois, the vilest cowardice of a counter-revolutionary—that," he had already announced, "is con-

<sup>24</sup> *Works*, vol. V, p. 241.

cealed behind the showy phrases of a liberal.”<sup>25</sup> As for liberals who tried to agree with him “You, my little liberal, are so incapable of understanding these convictions that, even when you praise them, you can’t do it without some kind of idiocy.”<sup>26</sup> “The very thing the capitalists and their diplomats stand in need of at the present time is ‘Socialist’ servants of the bourgeoisie to stun, fool and drug the people by phrases about a ‘democratic peace.’”<sup>27</sup>

Before the great opportunity Lenin was even willing to forgive and forget—or at least merely to file for a possible future reference—his enmities of the past. It was on this great issue that for the first time since they had visited the Zoo together in 1903 Lenin and Trotsky found themselves on the same side. It would be an exaggeration to say that they made friends, but at least they worked together. How indeed, one may ask, granting the Marxian assumptions, could anyone have acted differently from Lenin and Trotsky? All Marxians had been repeating for years that patriotic appeals were the capitalist’s stock-in-trade, which he trotted out to keep the workers quiet at times when other tactics were inconvenient, that bourgeois Parliamentary democracy was a fraud, that at all seasons the class war must be prosecuted. How then could a Marxian such as Kautsky support the war on the ground that Germany was the victim of an Allied plot of encirclement? What if she was? What was he to Germany or Germany to him, if he had learnt well his master’s lesson? Or again how could a Marxian, such as Plekhanov, talk of this as an exceptional war which must be supported because this time Russia was allied against autocracy with the Western democratic nations? Was it not the stalest of the capitalists’ tricks to agree that peace was lovely and war horrible but to plead that this war was alone an exception, just and necessary? Or how could a Marxian, such as Vandervelde, plead soapily for

<sup>25</sup> *Works*, vol. IV, p. 259.

<sup>27</sup> *Works*, vol. V, p. 234.

<sup>26</sup> Letter to Stasova, Fox, Lenin, p. 129.

peace—a peace which would have left unsettled the class war to the inevitability of which he had given a lifetime's preaching?

The answer is that Lenin and Trotsky, with all their differences, had in common, that they did really believe in revolution—in what Trotsky called “permanent revolution.” In that they differed from many of the other revolutionaries. Such a man as Plekhanov had lived in exile and as a revolutionary for over thirty years. He was a professional revolutionary and had formed the habits to which such a life leads. He did not guess it himself but he had been preaching the Revolution for so long that he would be quite lost if the Revolution should really come. For then he would lose his pulpit, and there is no article of furniture with which a man—especially if he be an atheist—parts less readily than he does with his pulpit. If the Revolution came, it would spoil his lectures; it would mean rewriting his notes. Awful thought, it might not happen in exactly the way in which he had been telling audiences for a generation that it must happen. And therefore faced with the responsibility of making a revolution, he drew back and cudgelled his brains for an excuse for postponement.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE WAR

AT the outbreak of the war Lenin was at Poronin, preparing to make a trip to Brussels in order to make final the breach between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks that the International Socialist Bureau was attempting to heal. The war of course prevented the trip. Instead he was arrested by the Austrian police as an enemy alien. Searching his rooms, they found there some agricultural statistics which they were persuaded were a cypher code, and therefore put him in prison as a Russian spy. However the Austrian socialist, Victor Adler, a deputy called Diamand and others were able to persuade the authorities that here was no spy, and after a fortnight he was permitted to leave the country and crossed the Swiss border. He settled first at Berne, where he remained until October. It was in Berne that he learnt—chiefly from his friend Karpinsky—which of the comrades had stood true and which had played false in the crisis. Lenin's immediate associates, such as Zinoviev, and Trotsky stood with him. Plekhanov, Alexinsky and the Mensheviks were all traitors, Plekhanov positively for the war, Martov for a feeble neutrality, Gorky, much to Lenin's disgust "has disgraced himself by signing that foul little paper of those dirty Russian liberals"<sup>1</sup>—a letter of Russian artists and writers, protesting against German atrocities. Of foreign socialists the great majority in each country was supporting the policy of its government. "They have all acted basely," wrote<sup>2</sup> Lenin to Karpinsky. And to Shlyapnikov, "do not be an optimist and beware of the intrigues of liquidators and opportunists. Although it is true that

<sup>1</sup> Letter 219.

<sup>2</sup> Letter 210.

Martov is moving more towards the Left, yet he stands alone. But what will happen to-morrow? To-morrow he will roll down towards the general plan; to shut the workers' mouths (and dull their minds and consciences) by an elastic resolution in the spirit of Kautsky, who justifies all and everything. Kautsky is the most hypocritical, revolting and harmful of all. Internationalism consists, kindly note, in the workers of each country shooting at the workers in another country under the pretext of 'Defence of the Fatherland.' We must take a firm line and at once."<sup>3</sup> And again he wrote<sup>4</sup> to Shlyapnikov, "I hate Kautsky and at the moment I despise him more than any one; a beastly, rotten, smug hypocrite. . . . Rosa Luxemburg was right; she saw long ago that Kautsky, the senile theoretician, was cringing to the majority of the party, the opportunists. There is nothing in the world at present more harmful and dangerous for the *ideological* independence of the proletariat than this filthy, smug and disgusting hypocrisy of Kautsky. He wants to hush everything up and smear everything over, and by sophistry and pseudo-learned rhetoric lull the awakened consciences of the workers. If Kautsky succeeds in doing this, he will become the principal representative of the bourgeois rottenness in the workers' movement, and Trul'stra will be on his side." Trul'stra was the Dutch socialist leader. "Oh, that Opportunist Trul'stra is nimbler than our kind little old man, Kautsky. How Trul'stra manoeuvred to push honest people and Marxists out of the Dutch party (Horter, Pannekuk and Wynkoop). Never shall I forget how Roland Holst came to see me in Paris and said of Trul'stra, 'A dirty dog! I am sorry you have been casting pearls before him. . . .' Trul'stra plus those swine opportunists in the Central Committee of the German social-democrats are conducting a dirty little intrigue to cover everything over. . . . The workers need the truth now more than ever, the whole truth and not filthy diplomacy, nor

<sup>3</sup> Letter 216.

<sup>4</sup> Letter 218.

the game of sticking picces together, nor the covering up of evil by elastic resolutions. It is quite clear to me that Kautsky plus Trul'stra plus Vandervelde . . . are busy intriguing with this object in view. . . . Get to know Helgund, a young Swedish social-democrat and leader of the 'opposition.' . . . He is only a simple, sentimental anti-militarist; these people should be told; either you support the slogan of Civil War or you remain with the opportunists and chauvinists." But even faithful Shlyapnikov was not quite faithful. The swine had picked up some of the pearls that had been cast before them and used them for their own purposes. "Trul'stra has deceived you and led you into temptation," Lenin had to write again to Shlyapnikov four days later.<sup>5</sup> "He is an arch-opportunist and an agent of the intrigues of the basest centre of the most base opportunists, the German social-democrats (with Kautsky at their head basely defending the opportunists) and their most base Central Committee. We shall not agree to any such conferences, nor join in any steps on the initiative of such scoundrels. We shall stand aside; let them disgrace themselves and, having disgraced themselves once, they will disgrace themselves again. The French have already rejected their intrigues and without the French only a dirty farce of filthy scoundrels is possible," and so on for some more pages about the vileness of Trul'stra and Kautsky and Meshovsky, whose real name was Goldenberg, about "poor Gorky" who has "disgraced himself," and his "foul little paper," and then back again to Kautsky, to whom he returns with all the repetitiveness of the obsessed. Kautsky, "the worst of all, the hypocrite." "Our slogan," he concluded, "is civil war." All else was "petty-bourgeois wailing" and "petty-bourgeois snivelling." To his sister he substituted for abuse yet more bitter sarcasm. "It is quite understandable why the Liberals are again praising Plekhanov; he has fully deserved this shameful punishment."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Letter 210.<sup>6</sup> Letter 220.

He went also in October to a lecture which Plekhanov was giving on the war in Lausanne and brawled there. At the same time he was giving to his views a slightly more objective form both in his newspaper, the *Social-Democrat*, and in a little pamphlet which he composed entitled *Theses on the War*. Lenin put forward his views in a characteristically abusive form. However wide their difference in matter, his epistolary manner was curiously reminiscent of that of Luther. Yet it must be remembered in Lenin's favour that there was a most arguable case that the Leninist attitude towards the war was the Marxian attitude and that those who differed from Lenin and still claimed for themselves the title of Marxians were playing traitor to the cause. One cannot withhold some sympathy for a man confronted with treachery. But, whoever was the true interpreter of Marx, the difference between Kautsky and Lenin was largely explicable by the difference of the countries, on which their minds were fixed. Lenin was a Russian and, as has been noted, though he lived so many years abroad, he never came to any sort of understanding of any other nationalities. Earlier in the year in his pamphlet on the *Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, he had quoted with approval against Rosa Luxemburg Marx's shrewd rebuke to a superficial cosmopolitan. "By the negation of nationalities he appeared, quite unconsciously, to understand their absorption into the model French (i.e. the speaker's) nation."<sup>7</sup> But what was sauce for Rosa Luxemburg was not sauce for himself. He understood the superficial nature of Russian patriotism, saw that that patriotism was not strong enough to survive suffering and saw in the war the opportunity for Marxism. The war was to prove him right about Russia. But Kautsky was a German, and in imagining that either Germany or any of the Western countries would follow along Russia's road Lenin was most disastrously wrong. Patriotism in Western Europe was an enormously stronger emotion than

<sup>7</sup> *Works*, vol. IV, p. 276.

it was in Russia. It was not a question of what the German socialists ought to be but what they were. They were Germans first and socialists afterwards. The event was to show that even the miseries of defeat were not to turn them into Marxians and, when, refusing to learn such a lesson, Lenin's foolish disciples of a later day were to continue with their attempt to send Germany down the Russian road, they got for their answer Hitler and the Brown Shirts and the death of all their dreams.

Therefore, in so far as the debate lay between Lenin and those who still laid claim to the name of Marxian, Lenin had on the whole the better of it. But among those who had been hitherto revolutionaries, there were a few—and of these the most notable the Italian, Benito Mussolini—who saw in a flash what was the meaning of the patriotism of the socialists. It meant, they saw, not merely that Marxism would not now conquer but that it would not ever conquer Europe. Capitalism was indeed transient and must inevitably pass away, but patriotism was permanent and would endure. The mistake of the Marxians was their attempt to explain patriotism in economic terms, and a revolution against capitalism which deliberately antagonized patriotism must necessarily be a frustrate revolution and would be compelled, even after its success, to retrace its steps in the direction of capitalism. Capitalism could only be overthrown by a party that was astute enough to enlist the power of patriotism against it.

The war, if it brought to Lenin his opportunity, also put many obstacles in the way of his carrying on of his daily work. Before the war, if he wanted to get a letter or a book into Russia, he had only to elude the vigilance of the Russian police, on the look-out for revolutionary propaganda. But now governments put in his way many accidental obstacles in addition to those which they put by intention. The letter and the book could no longer go direct to Russia through Germany. They could only reach it by the indirect route



through England and Scandinavia and four sets of customs-officers had the chance of discovering the contents of the parcel instead of the former two. If parcels were marked "Urgent" they were apt to be closely examined and confiscated as suspicious. If they were not marked "Urgent" they were not forwarded. The war was a ready excuse for inquisition and interference that would not have been tolerated in peace. And, though Lenin's hope that the war would raise a great outburst of indignation against the Government was in the end to prove true, in its early months, before people had learnt what it meant, it was popular in Russia. The Government congratulated itself that it had succeeded in the time-honoured trick of "busying giddy minds with foreign quarrels." And with wise Machiavellism it determined to take advantage of this opportunity and to strike down as traitors those whom it did not dare to attack merely as social revolutionaries. On 30 September a conference of the Duma Social-Democratic Bolsheviks and party workers met in Finland, under the presidency of Kamenev, who was then the main representative of Lenin's party in Russia. The Government let it be. They preferred to wait for a time when all the wasps would be in the hole. The opportunity came with the meeting of the second Bolshevik Conference—also in Finland—at the beginning of November. They pounced and arrested the lot and put them on their trial. Kerensky was the barrister briefed for their defence.

The blow was a serious one for Lenin, for his fear was not so much that the Tsarist regime would not collapse as that, when it collapsed, the social-democrats would not be ready to take on. How could they prepare themselves, and how could they prepare the people to receive them without an organization? and how could a new organization be built up with communications between Switzerland and Russia as they were in 1914? "It is a terrible thing," he wrote to Shlyapnikov.<sup>8</sup> "The Government has evidently

<sup>8</sup> Letter 229.

decided to revenge itself on the Russian Social-Democratic Labour faction and will not stop at anything. We must expect the worst falsification of documents, pretexts and the setting of traps; false evidence, cases *in camera*, closed courts, etc., etc. I think that without using such means the Government would not have been able to get a conviction. . . . The work of our party has become a hundred times more difficult. And yet we will carry it forward."

He had his moods of depression. "If anything," he wrote,<sup>9</sup> "is calculated under certain circumstances to delay the collapse of tsardom, it is precisely the present war, which has placed the money-bags of the British, French and Russian bourgeoisie at the service of the reactionary aims of tsarism. . . . If anything can render yet harder the revolutionary struggle of the working class against tsarism, it is notably the attitude of the leaders of the German and Austrian social-democrats, whom the chauvinist Press in Russia is never tired of holding up as patterns." Yet that was not his general mood.

Working as best he could, he tried hard to improvise some new machinery which could be used for that transformation of the international into a civil war, for which he had called in his *War and Russian Social-Democracy*. The year 1914 went out, leaving him content with his own private condition and in a state of exalted and not unhappy anger towards the world. Of private things he wrote to his sister, of public to that strange woman, the Bolshevik Queen, Anastasia Kollontai, authoress of *Ways of Love*, at that time in refuge in Christiania. To his sister, he wrote,<sup>10</sup> "We are living here quite comfortably, quietly and peacefully in sleepy Berne. The libraries are good and I am well supplied in the ways of books. It is pleasant to do some reading." And shortly afterwards to Anastasia in a second postscript, that so frequent repository of ultimate sincerity, "The European War has done a great service to socialism

<sup>9</sup> *Bolshevik Manifesto of September 1914.*

<sup>10</sup> Letter 224.

in that it has clearly revealed the whole state of rottenness and swinery of opportunism, thus giving a magnificent incentive towards cleaning up the workers' movement and ridding it of the filth that has accumulated during the scores of peaceful years."<sup>11</sup>

Lenin himself of course never admitted any distinction between one type of capitalist government and another. He was indifferent whether the Government made its pretence at democracy or not. Yet other socialists fell short of his complete detachment, and many preferred the cause of France and Great Britain on the ground that they were more "liberal" than the autocratic and militaristic Central Powers. This being so, while many German socialists rallied to the patriotic cause, there was always a better chance of obtaining a revolt of the German socialists against patriotism than of the French or British. "An anti-chauvinist mood is growing among the Germans," Lenin thought himself able to report to his sister in January 1915.<sup>12</sup> And it was his fear that, ill-instructed, they would be guilty of the arch-fatuity of becoming pro-Ally simply because they were anti-German. "For us both Francophiles and Germanophiles are equally patriotic bourgeois, or their slaves, but not socialists."<sup>13</sup> As fatuous to his mind was the conduct of a small number of Jewish Russian socialists, who, in revolt against Plekhanov's policy of supporting the democratic Allies, supported the Germans on the ground that only through defeat of the Tsardom could the Jews hope to obtain justice. Jewish patriotism was to his mind as ridiculous as any other patriotism. "The Bundists for instance are generally Germanophiles and rejoice at the thought of Russia's defeat, but how are they any better than Plekhanov?"<sup>14</sup>

It was essential so to organize socialist opinion outside the Central Empires that, when the German and Austrian socialists revolted against their governments, they might be under no temptation to revolt in favour of the Allies rather

<sup>11</sup> Letter 226.

<sup>12</sup> Letter 229.

<sup>13</sup> Letter 231.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

than of civil war. Therefore he gladly accepted the invitation of the directing board of *Nashe Slovo*, or *Our Word*, to take part in a conference of the socialists of the allied countries to devise plans for fighting what they called "official-social patriotism."<sup>15</sup> Litvinov, who was the Bolsheviks' representative in London, and Lenin submitted to it a resolution which Litvinov moved, that "the undersigned representatives of social-democratic organizations in Russia (England, etc.) proceed from the conviction that the present war is an imperialistic war, not only on the part of Germany and Austria-Hungary but also on the part of England and France (who are acting in league with tsarism); that is to say, it is a war at a period when capitalism has reached the last stage of its development, a period when the bourgeois governments are breathing their last within national boundaries; it is a war directed exclusively towards the seizure of colonies, the plunder of competitive countries and the weakening of the proletarian movement by means of setting the proletariat of one country against the proletariat of another."<sup>16</sup>

In consequence of this he demanded that all socialists conform their conduct to the resolutions to which they had bound themselves on the coming of war by the Basle resolutions of 25 November 1912. These resolutions were:

1. To break up national blocs and destroy civil peace in all countries.
2. To appeal to the workers in all the belligerent countries to wage energetic class warfare, both economic and political, against the bourgeoisie of their own particular country, a bourgeoisie that is earning incredible profits on war supplies and is using the support of the military authorities to shut the mouths of the workers and to increase its own despotic control over them.
3. To condemn resolutely any voting of war loans.

<sup>15</sup> Letter 291.

<sup>16</sup> Letter 290.

4. To resign from the bourgeois ministries in Belgium and France and to regard entering a ministry and the voting of war loans as being the same sort of treachery to the socialist cause as is the whole behaviour of the Austrian and German social-democrats.

5. Immediately to stretch out a hand to the internationalist elements of German social-democracy, who are refusing to vote for war loans and to form with them an International Committee for the purpose of agitating for the cessation of war, not in the spirit of the pacifists, the Christians and petit-bourgeois democrats, but indissolubly linked with propaganda and the organization of mass revolutionary actions of the proletariat against the government and bourgeoisie in each country.

6. To support all attempts at union and fraternizing in the armies and in the trenches between the socialists of the belligerent countries, despite the prohibition of the military authorities of England, Germany, etc.

7. To call upon the women socialists in the belligerent countries, to increase agitation in the above-named direction.

8. To call upon the proletariat of all nations to support the struggle against tsarism and to support those social-democrat deputies in Russia, who have not only refused to vote for credits but also have not been deterred by the danger of persecution from conducting their socialist work in the spirit of international revolutionary social-democracy.<sup>17</sup>

Neither Lenin nor the Jews who acted with him were able to understand that love is a bond whose strength can only be known when it is tested by a strain. In the time of academic debate the socialists of Western Europe may have thought that they had no love for their country. Peril proved them in error. It was only the Orientals to whom patriotism was meaningless.

As little could Lenin understand the dislike of violence among those whose patriotism was not aroused by the

<sup>17</sup> Letter 230.

struggle. If patriotism was not enough for Nurse Cavell, pacifism was certainly not enough for Lenin. He approved, of the Scandinavian socialists as little as he approved of those of Germany or the Allies. "Can the position of the Left Scandinavian social-democrats, who disapprove of the arming of the people be appraised and considered to be right?" he wrote to Anastasia.<sup>18</sup> "... These Scandinavian petit-bourgeois in their little kingdoms have penetrated almost to the North Pole and take pride in the fact that you can travel to them for three years and yet not reach them. How can a revolutionary class on the eve of a social revolution be against the arming of the people? It is not a struggle against militarism but a cowardly striving to run away from the major questions of the capitalist world. How can class warfare be 'recognized' without understanding the inevitability of its transformation at certain given moments into civil war?"

Indeed there were few people of whom Lenin did approve, and the Bolsheviks met with but little success in the votes of international congresses. Therefore, after the fiasco of London, they had a conference of their own in Berne in March 1915 (for that was the only sort of conference where they were likely to have a majority.) Before that conference Lenin was the chief speaker. He argued, as always, that the task of revolutionaries, was to work for the defeat of the Russian army, for out of defeat in war revolution would arise. He was able to carry the conference and resolutions were passed, denouncing the policy of the defence of the Fatherland as a treason to revolution and demanding the summoning of a Third International, to organize the class war whose cause had been betrayed by the spinelessness of the pacifists and chauvinists of the Second International.

At the moment the Russian army was apparently not doing so badly in the war. It seemed to have recovered from the disaster of Tannenberg, and in November had

<sup>18</sup> Letter 234.

it was patently false. Just as most monetary reformers greatly exaggerate in their criticisms the understanding by bankers of the banking system, so Lenin, like many of his followers, greatly exaggerated the intelligence of the masters of capitalist society. Or at least he misunderstood their mentalities. Suppose the whole Marxian analysis to be true and government to be merely "the executive committee for managing the affairs of the governing class as a whole" and society to be divided into its two classes at the head of one of which stood such a man as Lord Grey, at the head of the other such a man as Lenin. There was at least this distinction between the two men on which Lenin did not sufficiently dwell. Lenin continually thought of himself as the antagonist of Grey, but Grey did not think of himself as the antagonist of Lenin. "Why should people who are well fed," Lenin asked,<sup>23</sup> "force hungry people to fight against each other? Could you name a more idiotic or revolting crime?" But, rightly or wrongly, such men as Lord Grey did not look on society as the mere arena of the class war. Such a man as Grey loved fishing and wild birds a great deal more than he loved the capitalist system, if indeed he loved the capitalist system at all.

It is true indeed that Grey's way of life—the way of the country gentleman—was only possible because of the existence of a certain economic arrangement of society. You may, if you wish, say that his survival was bound up with the survival of capitalism, although it is far more true that he was in Marxian terminology, a survival of the pre-capitalist society, only able to survive because capitalism's victory was not yet complete and doomed to perish in the completeness of its triumph. Yet it is true enough that every government does of its nature, whether its members know that it does so or not, stand for the defence of certain economic arrangements. But Lenin could never understand that it stood for the defence of other causes, too—that beside

<sup>23</sup> Quoted by Gorky, Fox, *Lenin*, p. 198.

the question whether things should be done in a communist way or a capitalist way, there were also the questions whether they should be done in an English way or a German way, in a Christian way or a secularist way, that there were many people, who, understanding perfectly the different issues, thought others to be more important than the economic. It is the mark of the limited mind that it creates a false simplicity by seeking to explain truths that are in reality complex in terms of a single factor. To Marx all is economics, to Freud all is sex, to Clausewitz all is war, to another all is proportional representation or Hay-dieting or God knows what. Lenin was the victim of such a simplification. He neglected the power of nationality, whether among his enemies, the Christians, or among his supporters, who were for the most part Jews. And it is an irony that those who to-day sympathize with his experiment in America or Western Europe, deprived of all other explanation of the curious conduct of his successors, should at the last be reduced to pleading that we must not judge the Russians because their mentality is so very different from ours. If only Lenin had understood this from the first, how much trouble would have been saved!

In July there was a meeting of the Vorkonferenz in Berne, which decided to call on the proletariat of the world to rise on behalf of peace. At the same time Lenin and Zinoviev produced in collaboration a pamphlet entitled *Socialism and the War*, in which they gave their interpretation of the way in which the proletariat was called on to perform its duty. It was important, for after the defeats of this summer there was a definite probability of the collapse of the tsarist regime, if peace should not be made. Lenin, more astute in his judgment of Russian affairs than the regular diplomats, as he was much less astute than they in his judgment of the affairs of the world, rightly recognized this coming collapse. He saw that the Allied governing classes in foolish ignorance would refuse to allow the Russians to make



peace and the Russian governing classes in obstinacy and loyalty would refuse to make it. The coming of such a collapse necessarily threw upon the Russian revolutionaries an enormous burden of responsibility. They were inevitably jerked into a leadership of the world revolutionary movement. But it was important that they should prove themselves worthy of that responsibility and quite uncertain whether from Lenin's point of view they would do so—whether power could be wrested from what Lenin called "Trotsky and the company of foreign lackeys of Opportunism."<sup>24</sup> (The collaboration with Trotsky had not lasted; personal antipathy was too great.) In September the Zimmerwald Conference of all Left Wing Socialists was to meet. Its task, as Lenin saw it, was no longer academically to debate what was to be done on some hypothetical and distant day of liberation. "Military failures are helping to shake the foundations of tsarism and are facilitating the union of revolutionary workers in Russia and other countries." Russian socialists at Zimmerwald would have to answer the practical questions. What are you going to do when tsarism collapses? and how will your action help the cause of world revolution? "They say, 'What will you do if you, the revolutionaries, defeat tsarism?' To which I reply (a) our victory will inflame a hundredfold the movement of the Left in Germany, (b) if 'we' were to defeat tsarism completely we should offer peace to all the fighters on democratic conditions and, on refusal, we should conduct a *revolutionary* war."<sup>25</sup> (As so often, he was right about Russia and wrong about the rest of the world.)

The Zimmerwald Conference met. It was a hotch-potch collection of all sorts of people with left-wing sympathies. There were delegates from the Social Revolutionary party as well as from the social-democrats, the Jewish Bundites, who were working for a German victory, and stray journalists. Lenin was the leader of the extreme left wing and naturally

<sup>24</sup> Letter 239.

<sup>25</sup> Letter 237.

was not satisfied with the resolutions of the Conference, although the world at large hailed them as the last word in revolution. He was, however, glad to have had an opportunity of explaining his position, and glad, too, because for the first time he had attracted to himself a volume of support, if only of a small minority, from non-Russian socialists. After it he described with some pleasure "our small group" as "the Central Committee plus the Polish Social-Democracy plus the Letts plus the Swedes plus the Norwegians plus one German plus one Swiss."<sup>26</sup> That was good enough. The tsarist regime was soon going to collapse from the weight of its own folly, and power would then pass into the hands of those who knew how to seize it. Whether your supporters were 51 per cent or 49 per cent was an irrelevancy. Meanwhile there was little to do but watch and wait. In September the Duma was dissolved, and Lenin in a letter to Shlyapnikov<sup>27</sup> wondered what this might mean. A separate peace? He thought not. A separate peace would mean no more Russian loans from either Paris or London, and without loans Russia would collapse. It was the paradox of the tsarist regime that its very fidelity to the maxims of the capitalist system overthrew the capitalist system. He was right, and he devoted himself anew to the pedestrian but necessary task of improving the means for the distribution of revolutionary literature in Russia. "The news from Russia shows the growth of the revolutionary mood and movement, although it is apparently not yet the beginning of the revolution," was his just judgment on the situation, contained in a letter to Shlyapnikov written on 10 October.<sup>28</sup>

Then in November came the welcome news of yet further Russian defeats. Perhaps as important to Lenin was the establishment in supreme influence over the Imperial family of the absurd and disreputable Rasputin. It would in any event have been an assistance to a revolutionary cause to

<sup>26</sup> Letter 244<sup>27</sup> Letter 240<sup>28</sup> Letter 243

be able to show that the royal family had submitted itself to such an idiotic and infamous influence. But Rasputin's religious character was a piece of double good fortune for Lenin. For it was in no way to his intention that his revolution should be merely an economic and political one; it was to be above all a religious revolution. Lenin himself, as a Marxian materialist, hated God because He was God—or rather, as he would have maintained, because He was not God. It was nothing to him in the forming of his own views whether a particular religious body was extrinsically evil or not in its activities, for it was intrinsically evil in so far as it was religious. Indeed to his mind good religious were more dangerous than bad as being the more likely to deceive the elect. What he called “priests of moral conviction” formed, in his opinion, “the most subtle and therefore the most especially loathsome kind of clericalism.”<sup>20</sup> Lenin would have been with Christ against Caiaphas, but he would have been yet more clamorously with Caiaphas against Christ. Yet, in order to persuade others who lacked the fire of his fanatic faith to join with him in the attack on religion, it was convenient that religion should be bad. The close official alliance between Church and State was a convenience, for the Church could be accused (with justice) of a too-great complacency towards the sins of the State. The revelation that Father Gapon had been used as a police spy was a convenience for Lenin and perhaps even went some way towards the forming of his mind. It was not difficult for him, with some plausibility, to use this story as a confession by the authorities that the religion which they professed was nothing but “an opiate of the people.”

The Rasputin story was somewhat different but as convenient. It was possible to dwell on Rasputin's notorious immorality and corruption, on the Empress' pro-Germanism as proof that the rulers preached the duties of patriotism

<sup>20</sup> *Essay on Tolstoy*. Quoted by Fox, *Lenin*, p. 163.

and morality to their proletarians but had no intention of submitting their own conduct to such bonds. Many high lessons could be drawn from the story, but the real importance of it was its supreme absurdity. It stripped the monarchy, and thus the whole Russian state, of all dignity. A monarchy is a symbol, and a symbol can never afford to be ridiculous, for men will not die for that which they despise, and, if you appeal to them to look behind the monarchy to the country which does deserve sacrifice, they ask rightly what in that case is the value of a symbol which obscures rather than assists the true vision. With the alliance of Rasputin to its falling fortunes the Church, to the public mind, was irrevocably involved in the catastrophe of the State. It is an evil thing when a Church allows itself to be used as nothing but the policeman of even a good and efficient state; it is doubly evil when it allows itself to be used as the policeman of a ridiculous state. "The Church," justly complained Miliukov, "is in the hands of the Hierarchy; the Hierarchy is prisoner of the State; the State is prisoner of a vagabond."<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile with 1916 Lenin continued his campaign against "the chauvinist war." Military defeats were now beginning to have their inevitable and expected effects. The economic life of Russia was beginning to fall into dislocation and discontent with the war was growing rapidly. In February there was a conference at Berne to which anti-war socialists from all the belligerent countries presented their reports on the growth of revolutionary movements in their respective countries. Lenin addressed it in an optimistic mood, arguing that the collapse of capitalism in all countries, whether as a result of or immediately after the war, was now inevitable and advancing his familiar warning that socialists must not be beguiled by foolish pacifist and, as he called it, Christian sentimentality, be caught by the collapse unprepared and let slip their oppor-

<sup>30</sup> Marcu, *Lenin*, p. 189

tunity to seize power. The alternative was now between Bolshevism and chaos. There was to his mind no third possibility.

"The victory of socialism," he wrote about this time in language that the Stalinists are fond of quoting, "is possible first in a few or even in one single capitalist country." But they do not always continue the quotation. "The victorious proletariat of that country," it goes on, "having expropriated the capitalists and organized its own socialist production, would confront the rest of the capitalist world, attract to itself the oppressed classes of other countries, raise revolts among them against the capitalists and in the event of necessity come out even with armed force against the exploiting classes and their states."<sup>1</sup>

As soon as the general Berne Conference was over, Lenin gave some lectures both in Berne and at Zurich to his Russian followers, instructing them on the tactics to be pursued in the coming catastrophe. To begin with, an important change in programme was necessary. Up till now the Bolshevik agrarian policy had been one of a municipalization of agriculture. The old unit of the large estate was to be preserved, the landlord to be evicted and his place taken by a municipal official who would perform the functions of the old landlord but of course, as was argued, at but a fraction of the cost. The difference between his salary and the old rents would be available for raising the standard of living of the peasants. Lenin argued that, during the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Revolution could only hope to survive if it submitted to a ruthless centralizing autocracy. Municipalization of the land would leave a dangerously large power in the hands of local authorities, which they might use to hamper central policy and thus bring the whole scheme to catastrophe. In the apotheosis of communism's final triumph, when the State "withered away," it might be right enough to concede

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, vol. V, p. 141.

local liberties, but the time for that was not yet. In its first years of struggle all Russia must consider herself as a city under siege and the rights of the central command must be absolute—in all things and particularly in its control of the food-supply. It was of the essence of dictatorship of the proletariat that the dictator should have the right to decide which of the proletariat should, in case of necessity, be fed and which should not. A plank of nationalization of land must therefore be substituted for that of municipalization.

But the trouble was the old trouble that by no means all of those who accepted the social-democratic programme were prepared to accept Lenin's dictation on the details of tactics. All were agreed that there must be a dictatorship of the proletariat, but there were many aspirants for the honour of symbolizing the proletariat. All were agreed on the necessity for ruthless discipline, but they were by no means agreed who should impose it and who should suffer it. A programme that society should be divided into hares and hounds is one peculiarly difficult to put peacefully into practice, where there is no agreed principle on which to decide who is a hare and who is a hound. The Tsar, even if he had no other advantages, had at the least the advantage that there happened to be no other claimant to his throne. It was by no means so with the throne of the communists.

Apart from his quarrels with so many other people, Lenin had at this time fallen into a quarrel with two members of his own Bolshevik group, G. L. Pyatakov, and a woman, Eugenie Bosh. He had been co-operating with them, on behalf of the Central Organization in producing a paper called *The Communist*, and as a result of their quarrel on the national question *The Communist* had been compelled to cease publication. Even the most faithful of his disciples, Shlyapnikov, was dismayed and wrote to chide him on his "obstinacy." Quarrels on principle were perhaps necessary,

he argued, but was there a principle involved here? Was this a necessary quarrel? And was this a time for unnecessary quarrels?

Lenin defended himself in a long reply.<sup>32</sup> The greater part of it was devoted to the very tedious recriminations and counter-charges, with which revolutionary politics are so largely filled. The most interesting point in it is his hot denunciation of the gospel of work. Lenin, like Hitler, was an ascetic and in many ways a puritan. During the years of exile he bore the absence of comforts without complaining, and, when power came to him, he was to win a reputation outstanding even among communist leaders for the rigour of his life. Yet in one respect he differed radically from the puritan ethic. He had no belief at all in the gospel of work for its own sake. It was Lenin's contention that Man was on the whole endowed rather with too much than with too little energy—at any rate in the present state of mechanical development—and that the troubles of the world came rather from his incapacity to be idle than from his idleness. Unable to do nothing at a time when there was nothing proper to be done, men did evil for lack of occupation. In all his rhetoric there is no record of any denunciation of the "idle rich"; his complaint against the rich was that they were all too busy with evil business. For instance, there was a psychological as well as an economic explanation of the war. If the capitalists had really no purpose save to pile up as high as might be the mountain of their riches, it is clear that there would have been no war. One of the reasons for the war was that there was in them a native restlessness, which must be satisfied even at the expense of their economic interests.

Nor, to his mind, was this disease of restlessness at all a disease peculiar to the rich. In the life of the revolutionary there must necessarily be long spells of waiting, during

<sup>32</sup> Letter 250.

which the most important service that he can render to the cause is that of doing nothing. Lenin flattered himself that in a hard school he had learnt this difficult lesson. But he knew well that most revolutionaries had not learnt it and that most revolutions had been spoiled by the incapacity of their makers to rest in idleness. Either they struck too soon, or their nerves snapped under the strain of waiting and they quarrelled among themselves for lack of anything better to do. Of all the minor tasks of a revolutionary leader none was, he thought, more difficult than that of inventing work for subordinates who were not strong enough to do nothing. Why could they not play chess, as he did, or bathe like Gorky? "Eugenie Bosh is thinking of going to Russia," he wrote. "There she might be useful; here there is nothing for her to do. She will only begin inventing work for herself. Do you know this misery abroad—inventing work for those who are sitting abroad? It is a terrible calamity."

Briefly, Lenin's complaint against Pyatakov and Bosh, his reason why it was impossible to co-operate with them was that they and their friends had been caught flirting with the Menshevik "Chkheidze and Co." and also—which was even worse—with "Trotsky and Co." "The journal as an organ of Polish-Bukharin waverings is *harmful*," and he complained of "the non-party and non-conscientious behaviour of the Japs," as he called Pyatakov and Bosh. Among their friends were Radek, who was, however, Lenin admitted, "the best among them," and Bukharin, who was "devilishly *unstable* in politics."

In April the personnel of the Zimmerwald Conference with a few others met for a further conference at Kienthal. Lenin had by then succeeded in patching up his differences with Radek, and he, Radek and Rosa Luxemburg led the extreme left-wing group, which demanded that the socialists of every country should organize general strikes and sabotage of war efforts in their countries, to be followed by armed risings, when by these means the military machinery



had first been thrown into chaos. Some of the delegates argued, with reason, that a refusal to send up ammunition in the middle of a battle would not prejudice the soldiers in favour of a revolutionary party and that the soldiers, after such an experience, would be more likely to turn their arms against the revolutionaries than to support them. Yet Lenin, though he did not quite have things his own way, was pleased with the conference. Of its forty-three participants twelve were definitely what he called Left. "The Left were stronger this time," he wrote<sup>33</sup> to Shlyapnikov, "a Serb, three Swiss, a Frenchman (not a deputy; not from a group but independent) two Germans (B. Tahlheimer and E. Meyer) (from the 'International Group') supported us in the main." A compromise manifesto was adopted, which, "in spite of the numerous deficiencies" was, he reported, "a step forward."

Immediately after this conference he settled down in Zurich. He had lodgings in an old sixteenth-century house in the Spielgelgasse—mean lodgings—a single room, furnished only with a table, two chairs, two beds and a sewing machine. He could never open the window, because it looked out on an enclosed court, filled with the reek of an evil sausage factory. Yet he stayed there because one day he had heard his landlady say, "The soldiers ought to turn their own weapons against their governments." Every day he went to the public library and worked hard there on his pamphlet, *Imperialism, the Highest State of Capitalism*.

It was the contention of this pamphlet that twentieth-century Imperialism was not essentially the product of the personalities of its apparent creators but an inevitable development of capitalism. In the nineteenth century the effective ownership of the means of production and distribution was vested in the hands of a few capitalists, who made their living by selling their products to the rest of society. But the rest of society only got its purchasing power out of

<sup>33</sup> Letter 259.

the wages which it received from its capitalist masters. Now each individual could only sell his product if he could put it on to the market at a price as low as that of his competitors. Therefore he must pay low wages, In order to sell, each particular capitalist paid low wages. And yet, if all the capitalists paid low wages, there was not sufficient purchasing power to buy the goods that were thrown on to the market at all, irrespective of which particular capitalist might be able to capture that market.

This was the dilemma of capitalism—a dilemma from which there was no real escape. However, for a time the system had been made to seem to work by the creation of additional purchasing power abroad to buy the surplus product through loans. And, as long as England was the only industrialized country, it was she alone who had this need for the creation of purchasing power abroad, and the system of foreign loans, if fundamentally fatuous, was at least workable. Then however in the closing years of the nineteenth century the financiers of other countries, which had by then industrialized themselves, also wished to make foreign loans in order that their countries' surplus products might be disposed of. Of those countries two—France and Germany—were militarily great powers. For a time non-British financiers appeared willing to accept the hegemony of London and to work through her and through the British system. But a variety of events around the end of the century, of which the most important was the Boer War, convinced German financiers that it was folly for them to expect fair play from London. It was necessary to challenge the hegemony of London. Therefore with the twentieth century there began the new era—the era of international financial competition.

With the victory of the financier over the manufacturer the old-fashioned simple competition between firm and firm had largely given place to trust, cartel and combine, but there had taken its place the new world-wide competition

between financiers. Lenin welcomed the big banker as his unwilling but most necessary ally. It was he, he argued, who had made communism both possible and inevitable. "Without big banks," he was later to write in *Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?* "socialism would be impossible of realization. . . . The big banks . . . we shall take from capitalism ready made."<sup>11</sup>

Lenin rejected the argument, put forward by Kautsky and Hilferding, that the financiers will in their turn see the advantage of combination over competition, and the imperialisms merge to form an "ultra-imperialist" combination of all the imperial states. There have been such combinations in the past, he argues, and there may be other such combinations in the future. But they are always temporary and for a particular purpose. Financiers can combine but they can only combine *against* people. Lasting partnership requires mutual good faith, and financiers lacked the honour proverbial among thieves. It was their dilemma that, if competition was allowed to remain in the system, it must infallibly wreck it, while, if it was altogether eliminated, the capitalist's justification for existence was destroyed and people would say, "If competition is unnecessary, what is there to be said against communism?"

The system which worked after a fashion when the lending interests of the world were united could not possibly work when there was competition between lenders. For it was only the unity of the lending interest as against the uncoordinated borrowers who were scattered all over the world which made lending so profitable. Therefore, if lending was to be profitable at all, it was essential that one of the lending countries should establish its predominance over the others. But between Great Britain, the holder, and Germany, the challenger, neither was prepared to yield place to the other. The two competing imperialisms therefore fought one another in every quarter of the world for

<sup>11</sup> *Works*, vol. VI, p. 260.

the right to lend—fought one another in battle that began with the pen and the tongue but which ended, as inevitably they must have ended, with the sword.

That was the argument. There was about it a little too much of the note that what did happen must have happened. But that is merely to say that it is dressed in Marxian clothes. Like other Marxians, Lenin, while he was too revolutionary in action, was too conservative in thought. He assumed that Progress would continue to move along the curve upon which he found it moving, that Man would continue to clamour only for more and more machines and that, because the units of production had become larger in the past, therefore they would become larger still in the future. Yet there can be no doubt about it that substantially Lenin's analysis of the growth of financial imperialism was correct, and he was able to marshal overwhelming data to prove it so. There were, of course, other forces in world politics which he was quite incompetent to appraise. For instance, he wrote at about this time an article on the Irish rebellion<sup>85</sup> in which he did not mention Catholicism. Yet this should not blind us to the truth that the loan-system was one of the most important causes of the war of 1914 and that there were few who understood the working of that system better than Lenin. Where he was in error was in his belief that communism would provide a remedy for that system. It matters little whether you call a man a commissar or call him a private financier. A system in which the control of credit is vested in the hands of a few men is a tyranny. Without the guarantee of widely distributed property the free state can never be built. There is no answer to the great dilemma which Mr. Belloc puts on the title page of his *Servile State*. "You must either restore the institution of property, or restore the institution of slavery. There is no third course."

In style *Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism* is incom-

<sup>85</sup> *Works* vol., V, pp. 301-7.

parably the best of Lenin's works. For it was written to pass the Russian censor, and therefore he dropped the Marxian jargon in which he, like other communists, usually wrote and used instead ordinary language, knowing from experience that the censor would be incapable of telling whether the ideas of the book were explosive but would judge merely by the presence or absence of certain words.

It was essential for Lenin not only as a philosopher but also as a tactician to argue that the war was the inevitable consequence of capitalism. For, if this argument was true, it condemned to futility the activities of these pacifists who were working merely to stop the war. Restore the *status quo ante bellum*, Lenin argued, and you were only restoring a status in which war must inevitably break out again. The only sane policy was to accept the war for what it was, the death-rattle of capitalism, convert it into a civil war and then establish peace on the only basis on which it could hope to endure—the communist basis. This thesis he was throughout this year ardently preaching, whenever opportunity offered, to the Swiss workers whom he found, as workers go, admirably free from chauvinism but at the same time lamentably deficient in class hatred—indeed much too prone to the folly of believing that things would go on all right, if only people would stop fighting. “A charitable institution for petty bourgeois clerks,” he called the Swiss Socialist party in disgust, while its leader, Grimm, answered his demand that they plunge their country into the turmoil of class war by saying that, if Switzerland fell into anarchy and military impotence, all that would happen would be that both sets of belligerents would invade it in order to hold it against the other and it would become a battlefield of the war. *Cui bono?* Certainly not for that of “petty-bourgeois clerks.” In a fashion that was both most un-Swiss and most un-socialist Grimm told Lenin that he was “a foreigner” and had better get out.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Letter 260.

In Russia society was now visibly in disintegration. From Austria, too, there came rumours of similar troubles. In October Lenin wrote to Franz Koritschoner, the Austrian Left-Wing socialist, to ask him what was the truth of a report which he had read in the *Berner Tagwacht* that 24,000 workers had struck at the munition works at Speier and that Czech soldiers had fired on them and killed 700. At the same time he asked some questions and read the Austrians a little lecture about the recent attempt of the socialist, Friedrich Adler, to murder the Austrian Prime Minister, Count Sturg. The letter is interesting as giving us a succinct statement of Lenin's views on the ethics of killing.<sup>37</sup>

His position was this.

He was in revolt against both of the extreme "mystical" approaches, as he thought them to the problem—to the "mysticism" which saw sanctity in human life and to the "mysticism" which saw tyrannicide as in itself noble. There were revolutionaries whose very gospel it was that their cause could not triumph without the shedding of blood. But the approach to the problem must be purely pragmatic. The only question to ask of a particular act of assassination was "Would it help the triumph of the cause?" If so, "killing is no murder," as Lenin had written many years before in the *Iskra*. And "the servile written statements of the opportunists in *Vorwaerts* and the Vienna *Arbeiter Zeitung*, in which they condemned this attempt on Count Sturg in language about the sanctity of human life, are," he wrote, "simply revolting." On the other hand experience had taught him that, as a general rule, "as revolutionary tactics, individual attempts are both impractical and harmful." Reactionary regimes did not as a rule simply collapse with the murder of their leader. Rather did a successor take his place who continued repression with yet more vigour and more excuse. No good had come out of the killing of Alexander II or of Stolypin. Lenin did not

<sup>37</sup> Letter 258.

specifically mention his brother, but he indicted in a sweeping condemnation the whole tactics of "the terrorists." Individual acts of terrorism are only justified, "when they are directly linked with the mass movement,"—that is to say, when they are against a leader of a regime that is already tottering and when there was an organized revolutionary party, strong enough and ready to seize power in the resulting confusion. By such tests Adler's act was not justifiable. "It was an act of despair on the part of a Kautskian." "But we revolutionaries must not despair." It was but another example of that failure, so common among revolutionaries as among other human beings, the cause of the failure of so many schemes of mice and men—the inability to wait, the incapacity for idleness.

Yet, ironically enough, before the year was out, there was another murder which proved itself a very notable exception to the generalization that assassinations accomplish nothing. Lenin had nothing to do with it. It was not the work of revolutionaries, as he used the word "revolutionary." Yet it was an important milestone on the road to the accomplishment of Lenin's revolution. In December of 1916 Rasputin was murdered in the house of Prince Yousupof by a collection of aristocratic officers.

As is known Rasputin was murdered by those who hoped, not to overthrow the monarchy and the old regime, but to save it. They murdered Rasputin because they saw that he by his influence was dragging the monarchy down to destruction. He had established such an influence over the Imperial family that there was no possibility of persuading them to break with him. The monarchy could only be saved by being saved from itself; Rasputin's influence could only be destroyed by Rasputin's death.

Such reasoning clearly proved that the regime was in desperate straits and the prestige of a monarchy that could only be saved from evil counsels by the murder of evil counsellors could hardly stand high. And, as all know

and as the event proved, it was found to be too late to save it. Yet, without embarking upon a discussion of its morality, the policy of murder was not a hopeless one. In the first place the influence of Rasputin over the Empress was so peculiar an influence—more in the nature of a mesmerism than of a rational persuasion to a policy—that there was a chance that his removal might bring a sudden reinvigoration. It did not prove to be so of course, but it was worth trying. It was perhaps the regime's best chance. In the second place we must remember in judging these tsarist officers, even as we must remember afterwards or indeed even to-day in judging the Bolsheviks, that murder does not particularly shock the Russians. It is almost Russia's normal form of a vote of censure. There was a touch of the Russian as well as a touch of the Bolshevik in Lenin's contempt for the prating of the opportunist "German papers about 'the sanctity' of human life." And even Germans do not hold life so very sacred by English standards. The English mind being killed for their politics much more than anybody else.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE BOURGEOIS REVOLUTION

LENIN, though he had for some time seen the growing disintegration of the Russian state and prophesied its necessary collapse, did not foresee the moment of its collapse. As often, the prophet was caught unprepared by the fulfilment of his own prophecy. He did not have any inkling in the early months of 1917 that this was the beginning of a year that was going to see a momentous change in his own fortunes and that before ten months were passed he would be the absolute ruler of one of the Great Powers of the world and seated upon the throne of the Romanovs. To us who know the future his letters in those first few months are almost comic—complaints about the cold of the Swiss winter, and laments of *la vie chère* and that money is hard to come by. His wife has been ill; is his sister well? His wife has a plan for producing a *Pedagogic Dictionary* or *Pedagogic Encyclopædia*. Could his brother-in-law find a publisher for it? and could he make a contract with the publisher? and would he read the contract very carefully to be sure that there was no catch in it, or the publisher “will simply take *all* the profits for himself and enslave the editor. *That does happen.*”<sup>1</sup> He lectured to some Swiss socialists in January and prophesied the coming of revolution, but added, “We of the older generation may not live to see the decisive battles of this coming revolution.”<sup>2</sup>

With the New Year it had become evident to those in Russia that the murder of Rasputin was not going to save the tsarist regime. If Lenin did not immediately see what

<sup>1</sup> Letter 262.

<sup>2</sup> Fox, *Lenin*, p. 216.

was coming, that was not due to a faultiness in his judgment but because, what between censorships and lack of communications, it was not possible for him to obtain news. Letters, when they arrived, took weeks to make their round-about journey, and often they did not arrive at all—particularly when addressed to Lenin, for he was by now in the black books of the French police, and often had to complain of the seizure of his letters, whether those that were coming in or those that were going out. Apart from letters, his only source of information was the newspapers and the newspapers of the Allied countries printed no news of internal Russian conditions, and even the Swiss papers very little. Those of us who were dependent for our information upon newspapers can perhaps remember how completely the news of the February revolution fell on us like a bombshell.

Yet the first two months of 1917 saw the complete disorganization of the tsarist regime. With the breakdown of communications food began to run short in the towns, and on 10–23 February there were food riots in Petrograd. The Government, foolishly seeing in the Duma the source of their troubles attempted to suppress it. It had as yet no understanding that the situation differed radically from that of 1905 in that the army was no longer ready to suppress the revolutionaries. The army of 1905 was still loyal, but the army of 1917 was an army which now for two and a half years had been standing at battle against the German machine. It had suffered defeat far more often than not, and had suffered it, as the Russian soldier knew, not because of any inherent inferiority of Russian to German but because the Russian was always sent into battle worse fed, worse clad and worse munitioned than the German. This failure of supplies the Russian soldier ascribed, with much truth, to the incompetence and corruption of the governing class. No one could give him any clear account of what benefit he would get out of the war; no one could give him any notion when it would end.

Under such circumstances the army was by no means willing to do the governing class's dirty work for it by suppressing its enemies and shooting down in the streets those, whose grievances were as just, if less keen, than those of the soldiers themselves. This was the turning factor in the situation—the disloyalty of the army. It was not understood when the food riots broke out. The governing class had not understood that the army would not act; the revolutionaries who were in Russia did not understand that their hour had come. Even the army itself did not know how far its own disloyalty had gone. It was only when it was confronted with the order to shoot down its own brothers that it discovered that it was unwilling to do so.

The vivid and confused story of the last days of February has been often told, and it is beyond the scope of this book to tell it once again, for Lenin of course had no part in it. 14-27 February was the key-day, the day when the troops went over to the side of the revolution. The realization of the completeness of the disloyalty of the army was gradual. At first it was thought to be merely that this regiment and that regiment were unreliable, so a reliable regiment must be called in instead to restore order. But, after some three days of chaos, it became clear that there was no reliable regiment, and on 17 February-2 March the Tsar abdicated.

Without attempting to retell the story it is yet necessary to try and form some understanding of what was the situation in which Russia was left by Nicholas' abdication. According to tsarist constitutional theory the monarch was absolute and all other authority derived from him. Therefore, with the Tsar gone, there was, strictly speaking, no authority in Russia at all. The Duma, elected, as it was, on a restricted and gerrymandered franchise, in no real sense represented the Russian people. Yet, for want of any other body, men looked to the Duma to provide the country with a provisional government.



Lenin in 1917



On the other hand ugly facts had to be faced. Government, at the best of times, is based on force, and a government which is to save a country from anarchy when anarchy is threatened, is worse than useless, if it cannot command force: and, in these February days, those in Petrograd, who alone possessed force, were not willing to accept their orders from the Duma. The only body to whose authority they were willing to pay attention was that of the Soviet of Worker and Soldier Deputies. Therefore the liberal Duma government, which was installed in nominal power, was only able to exercise power in so far as it could obtain the co-operation of the Soviet. Or, to put the truth in another way, the Revolution left Petrograd with a dual government.

As has already been said, the word Soviet is a neutral word, and its connection with Bolshevism was a later and fortuitous connection. The Soviet, that was established by the February Revolution, had Bolshevik members, but it was predominantly Menshevik. Yet its constituency was the workmen and soldiers. The Duma's constituency was the landed and moneyed class. The Duma's provisional government under Prince Lvov was a liberal, capitalist, bourgeois government. It was clear that an alliance between two such bodies was certain to be uneasy and almost certain to be temporary. Eventually one would succeed in mastering the other and establishing itself as the real government. But which would be the conqueror? That, in these early February days, was far from certain—not merely to the rapturous publicists of the West who were hailing the easy triumph of democracy, for such were writing in ignorance of the very problem of the dual government, but even to those well acquainted with the truth. For no one yet knew what the provinces would say nor what would be the strength of the personalities that the two sides threw up.

The odds were probably on the Duma, and the provisional government should have won, if only it had played

its cards with skill, because the majority neither of the workers nor of the soldiers was yet converted to class war. The soldiers would not shoot down their comrades in order to preserve the tsarist regime which was committed to war. But, if the new government had had the courage to promise land and peace to the peasants, it is probable that the soldiers would have been willing to serve it in the suppression of any incidental anarchy that there might have been. It was the refusal to declare itself against the war which was the arch-mistake of the Provisional Government. Fidelity to the Allies was the cause of that refusal, but it was foolish fidelity, for, in the maxim of Vatel, *nul n'est tenu à l'impossible*, and a realist would have understood that, whatever treaties statesmen might have signed, the Russian army would never fight again. It was therefore no service to the Allies or anybody else to keep the country in a nominal state of war against Germany. Facts might as well have been recognized and advantage taken of them.

There was one great further reason why an observer in March 1917, might plausibly have prophesied that the Duma would win in the end. It was that the Soviet, as it was then constituted, did not want to win. The members of the Soviet had no wish at all to dethrone the Duma Government and to assume the responsibility of power themselves. Some of them did not wish to do this because they genuinely did not believe in a class-government and were hoping for the establishment of a true democracy. Others professed a theoretical belief in class war but said that the time was not ripe. In truth they had become revolutionaries by profession, had long since lost any ambition to translate their theories into practice and clutched at any excuse to escape from doing so.

Even after the February Revolution the Bolshevik Revolution was then far from inevitable. Only a small fraction of the population of Petrograd had in February ever heard of the Bolsheviks. No one dreamed that by dethroning the

Tsar he was putting the Bolsheviks in power. A strong personality at the head of the Duma, skilful, patient and subtle in detail but from the first declaring himself firmly for peace, could probably have won the day. The Soviet hardly could win because it was itself unwilling to win. The weakness of the Provisional Government, apart from that of personality, was that it did not declare for peace. And here, Lenin saw in a flash, lay the chance of the Bolsheviks. Just as three years before Mussolini had seen that who would capture Italy must declare for war, so now Lenin saw that who would capture Russia must declare for peace. Two bodies were in competition for power, neither of whom would give the people the one thing that they really wanted. Boldly promise peace, and there was just a chance for the Bolsheviks to slip in and snatch the prize of government away from both contenders. This was his hope, nor had he much fear that either the provisional Government or the Soviet would fail him in folly. He had a quiet confidence in the incompetence of the one and the cowardice of the other. His fear was that another would steal from him the role of *tertius gaudens* and slip in before him, and the man whom he feared was Trotsky.

"It was disappointing," he was writing<sup>3</sup> to Anastasia Kollantai in the very February that the revolution was brewing, "to receive news of Trotsky's bloc against Nikolai Ivanovich"—that is, Bukharin. "What a swine that Trotsky is! Left phrases and a bloc with the Right against the aims of the Left! He ought to be exposed (by you) if only in a short letter to the *Social-Democrat*."

Trotsky, as we have often said, had always held himself aloof from any of the social-democratic factions. He acted, now with one faction, now with another. At times he had acted with the Mensheviks, but his co-operation with them was purely temporary and opportunist. Between him and them there was a great gulf of principle. When Trotsky

<sup>3</sup> Letter 264.



said that the time was not yet ripe for revolution, he meant what he said. He intended that a day of ripeness should come. There was in his mind no intention of existing in a permanent protest against a regime that he never seriously proposed to overthrow.

It was this real wish for revolution, the readiness to seize the moment and not to shrink from it in excuses, which marked out Lenin and Trotsky from the other so-called revolutionaries—from such men as Stalin, or Kamenev and Zinoviev, whom Stalin was later to kill. No one who reads the history of 1917 can seriously believe that Zinoviev and Kamenev would have struck at Stalin, had they been left free to do so. For they would not have struck at Kerensky had they been left free to do so.

Theirs was not the nerve which can strike blows when the issue is doubtful. A man who preaches revolution and yet has not the courage to strike for his convictions is not a very noble man. And the test of 1917 was to show that by their sincerity Lenin and Trotsky certainly stood head and shoulders above their fellow-revolutionaries.

The news of the Revolution came to Lenin in Zurich. A friend brought it to him one morning in his shabby lodgings. He rushed out into the street and bought a paper, but there was nothing as yet in it. Then he hurried down to the Lake, where there was a board on which latest bulletins were posted. There he read, "An executive committee consisting of twelve members of the Duma is in possession of power. All the ministers have been put in prison. The Provisional Government will gladly recall all, who have suffered for the country, from their exile or their prison." He stumbled dazed across the street and aimlessly boarded a tram.<sup>4</sup>

The February Revolution which found Lenin in Switzerland found Trotsky in America. Each was naturally passionately anxious to get back to Russia before his rival. To

<sup>4</sup> Marcu, *Lenin*, p. 296.

neither was return a simple matter. For the Allies still hoped that the consequence of the Revolution would be to put heart into the Russian armies for the vigorous prosecution of the war. Therefore neither the British nor the French would favour the return of agitators, whose notorious purpose it was to preach peace and to throw the country into yet further dislocation. Yet how was it possible to get from New York to Russia without crossing the seas, of which Great Britain was mistress? or from Switzerland to Russia without going through Allied territory? To the first question there was no answer; to the second there was an answer. It was Lenin's advantage over Trotsky.

It was Lenin's first plan that his friend, Karpinsky, who was less well known to the police, should obtain a passport and visa for a return to Russia and that Lenin, disguised with a wig to look like Karpinsky, should return through France, England, thence to Holland, where people would be less concerned than in England about a passenger for Russia and where he could get a boat for Petrograd. Karpinsky was of course to go into hiding as soon as Lenin left and not to be seen again in Berne until he received a telegram from Lenin in Scandinavia that all was well. He also toyed with the notion of travelling with a Swedish passport and pretending to be a deaf mute, so that his ignorance of the language might not be discovered, but Krupskaya reminded him that he talked in his sleep. All such plans were clearly desperately risky, for, if he were discovered travelling in this way, he would be interned for the duration of the war and thus lose all his chance of making history. But to friends who pleaded with him against the risk he answered that it was essential to dare all in order to get back, if it was at all possible, and that half a chance was better than no chance. If he travelled under his own name he would quite certainly be interned.

Strangely enough, the man who made the suggestion which was adopted was his arch-enemy, Martov, the Menshevik

leader. There were many Russian exiles, of many schools of thought in Switzerland, and the first desire of all of them, when the news of February came through, was to return to their native land. Some wished to return for political and others for purely personal or sentimental reasons. It was Martov's suggestion that, while the Allies would refuse to give facilities for the return of revolutionaries, to the Germans, only anxious that Russia should not recover from dislocation, the return might be made to appear advantageous. A bargain might be struck.

Lenin at once welcomed the plan. "Martov's plan is good," he wrote.<sup>5</sup> It might, it is true, prove a certain handicap to his subsequent work in Russia if his enemies could represent—as indeed they did—that he had returned as a German agent. But on the other hand the plan had the enormous advantage that, provided that the Germans agreed to it, there was no risk of capture or internment. Either he could go or he could not and, if he went, he was certain to get there.

Negotiations were therefore opened with the German Government. It saw its own advantage in the scheme and agreed, on the condition that the Russian exiles, on their return, would procure the release of an equivalent number of interned Germans. Lenin also made conditions. It was his demand that no person should either enter or leave the train between the one German frontier and the other. They must be left entirely free to take uncensored into Russia any articles or documents that they wished.

Martov, Axelrod and the Mensheviks were by no means pleased at the enthusiasm with which Lenin took up their scheme, and sooner than return to Russia in his company, they preferred to drop out on the excuse that they were unwilling to embarrass the Soviet by reappearing in Russia before it had expressed a wish to have them. In the end they returned about a month after Lenin. Of such conduct

<sup>5</sup> Letter of 5

Lenin characteristically wrote, "I consider the Mensheviks who have ruined the common cause are scoundrels of the worst kind, who are afraid of 'public opinion'—i.e. of the social patriots."<sup>6</sup>

After some delays in the negotiation Lenin, his disciple, Zinoviev, and a small company, which consisted of nineteen Bolsheviks, six Jewish Bundists and three members of the staff of Lunacharsky's paper, the *Nashe Slovo*, or *Our Word*, crossed the German frontier in the closing days of March. It ground its way across the plains of Germany to Berlin, Lenin, we are told, walking up and down the corridor singing songs out of tune. From Berlin to Copenhagen, thence to Sweden, Finland and so to Petrograd.

The revolution had come in with the formulae of liberalism on its lips and therefore could hardly refuse to permit the return of those who were in exile because of their opposition to the tsarist regime. Had the Provisional Government possessed a Noske, it might have dared such an inconsistency, but it had no such possession. On the other hand Lenin had made no attempt to conceal his opposition to the new regime. "Our slogan is no support to the Government of Guchkov-Miliukov," he had frankly announced in his farewell message to the Swiss workers.<sup>7</sup> He therefore could hardly expect a personal welcome from the members of the Government, nor did he. He frankly confessed that he expected to be incarcerated in the fortress of Peter and Paul. It was only an accident that prevented it.

During the month between the February Revolution and Lenin's return the three leaders of the Bolsheviks in the Petrograd Soviet had been Kamenev, Stalin, cured of tuberculosis by the climate of Siberia, and one, Myranov, a Duma deputy, whom the Revolution had also found in Siberia. These three had been pursuing a policy which Lenin characterized as treason to Bolshevism—a policy of co-operation with the Mensheviks, of acceptance of the Provisional

<sup>6</sup> Letter 274.

<sup>7</sup> Trotsky, *Russian Revolution*, vol. I, p. 307.

Government and of support of "revolutionary defence" against Germany. Their argument was that the war, which had hitherto been imperialist and wrong, had now become right because it was a war of democracy against imperialism. "When army stands against army," wrote Kamenev in *Pravda*<sup>8</sup> of 28 March-10 April, "it would be the most stupid policy to propose that one of them should lay down its arms and disperse to its homes. That would be a policy not of peace but of slavery, which a free people would reject with indignation. No, it will remain staunchly, answering bullet with bullet and shell with shell."

This was all very well. But when you had not got any bullets and had not got any shells? Yet the ease with which Kamenev and Stalin had been dissuaded from revolution convinced Chkheidze, the Menshevik leader of the Soviet, that Lenin could also be persuaded, if only an opportunity for quiet explanation could be found. Therefore it would be a folly to make a martyr of him. Instead he went to meet him at the station, received him in the Tsar's waiting-room and with a bouquet of roses, presented by Voroshilov, the present Red marshal, and made to him a speech of welcome, in which he announced, "We consider that the chief task of the revolutionary democracy at present is to defend our revolution against every kind of attack both from within and from without. . . . We hope that you will join us in striving towards this goal."<sup>9</sup>

Lenin turned his back on Chkheidze and made a speech to the people denouncing the Government. "The people needs peace," he said,<sup>10</sup> "the people needs bread, the people needs land. And they give you war, hunger, no bread, and leave the landlords on the land."

Very few people in Petrograd at that time cared about the class war. What they cared about was peace, and it was Lenin's strength that he was the one politician who was

<sup>8</sup> Trotsky, *Russian Revolution*, vol. I, p. 303.

<sup>10</sup> Marc', *Lenin*.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, vol. I, p. 308.

unequivocally promising peace. He brushed impatiently away as jargon all the euphemisms about "revolutionary defence" which were on the lips of everybody else from Miliukov to Stalin. This made him from the first the hero of the soldiers, who were not unreasonably even more bitterly opposed to the war than the civilians. As soon as he was finished with the business with Chkheidze, they got hold of him and hoisted him up on top of an armoured car, and on this car Lenin went driving round and round Petrograd making speeches. "The robbers' imperialist war," he said,<sup>11</sup> "is the beginning of civil war in all Europe. . . . Any day may come the crash of European imperialism." A band played in between the speeches.

At last he came to the house of the Tsar's mistress, Kshesinskaja, where the Bolsheviks had established their headquarters. There he entered and he had to listen to another address. His reply was neither an expression of conventional thanks nor a repetition of the conventional phrases of Marxism. It was a drubbing of those who had welcomed him and whom he roundly accused of having sold the pass in his absence—a drubbing which one who heard it, Sukhanov, described as "thunderlike." "We don't need any parliamentary republic," he bluntly said.<sup>12</sup> "We don't need any bourgeois democracy. We don't need any government except the Soviet of workers', soldiers' and farmers' deputies." The world consisted of those who agreed with him—"the Zimmerwald Left"—and the rest. "The rest are the same old opportunists, speaking pretty words but in reality betraying the cause of socialism and the worker masses."

On that same day at Halifax in Nova Scotia, on the other side of the world, the British naval police removed from the Norwegian steamer, *Christianiafford*, Trotsky and four companions, passengers bound for Russia, and placed them under arrest.

<sup>11</sup> Marcu, *Lennu*.

<sup>12</sup> Trotsky, *Russian Revolution*, vol. I, pp. 311, 312

The next day Lenin issued his *Theses of 4 April*, in which he explained once more to the public that this was not the Government that he looked for. No government was a proletarian government until "from a privileged stratum occupying highly remunerative posts, remunerated on a bourgeois scale, 'its agents' became workers handling a special kind of weapon and remunerated at a salary not exceeding that of a competent worker."<sup>13</sup> By that test the Provisional Government was no more a proletarian government than is the present government of Stalin. There must be, he argued, another revolution, but as yet people are not ready for it. So for the moment there must be no violence. However the time for violence would come.

Stalin, recognizing his master's voice, at once confessed his fault and came to heel. "I shared this mistaken position," he said of his past compromises "with the majority of the party, and renounced it fully in the middle of April, associating myself with the *April Theses* of Lenin." Yet the political situation was, as Lenin wrote to his friends, Ganetzky and Radek in Stockholm,<sup>14</sup> "arch-complicated and arch-interesting." "The Soviet of Worker and Soldier Deputies," he explained, "concluded an *agreement* at the beginning of the revolution with the Provisional Government to *support* the latter. There is a contact commission." And, as even he admitted, "the Soviet controls the provisional government." With control it had exacted its pound of flesh for its support. The Government had been compelled to make concessions to the workers. It had proclaimed the eight-hour day and conceded increases in wages. An All-Russian Central Soviet of Professional Unions was being formed. But such concessions were of course to Lenin's mind of no value. What was wanted was the dictatorship of the proletariat; in concessions to the proletariat by the bourgeoisie he was not interested. Nor would such concessions as these have been of any value even on their own base,

<sup>13</sup> *Works*, vol. VI, p. 28.

<sup>14</sup> Letter 278.

meliorative plane. The rise in wages would soon be swallowed up in a much steeper rise in prices, and shorter hours would only mean fewer goods, of which there was already a dangerous shortage, and thus more poverty. It was folly to pretend that the Promised Land was to be had for the asking or the voting. It was rather his grim purpose to impose upon the workers a discipline of poverty, more grinding and terrible than they had ever known, perhaps than had ever been known in the whole history of man. Beyond that valley of suffering and starvation lay, he believed, the Promised Land, and he was prepared to cross it, whatever opportunists might do, and to compel, cajole and trick others into crossing it with him. But it would not be easy travelling and there would be many bones left behind to whiten in the valley. "It would not matter a jot," he said, "if three-quarters of the human race perished; the important thing was that the remaining quarter should be communists."<sup>15</sup> And he was a brave man and a cool man. He was prepared himself to be among that three-quarters. A "frenzied persecution"<sup>16</sup> had broken out against him as soon as the masters of the new Russia understood that here was stuff very different from that of which Stalin and Kamenev were made. He rated very highly the folly of the members of the Provisional Government, but he did not seriously think them quite such fools as to refrain from murdering him.

Nor was there yet sufficient public support behind him to make it really dangerous to strike at him. He was widely thought to be a bit mad (as indeed he was) and to have been so long absent from Russia that he was quite out of touch with conditions. "Among the newly arrived anarchists," reported Sir George Buchanan to the British Government, "was Lenin, who came through in a sealed train from Germany."<sup>17</sup> He made his first public appearance

<sup>15</sup> Fulop-Miller, *Mind and Face of Bolshevism*, p. 85.

<sup>16</sup> Letter 277.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted by Trotsky, *Russian Revolution*.



at a meeting of the Social-Democratic party and was badly received."

Things moved quickly. Miliukov, the most powerful figure in the Provisional Government, was a genuine imperialist. He wanted a war not merely of revolutionary defence but for the attainment of Russia's historic ambitions—particularly for Constantinople. But this was too much for the Soviet. A few days after Lenin's return Kerensky was compelled to repudiate Miliukov, and the Gutchkov-Miliukov Government fell from power. The consequent government crisis gave Lenin his opportunity of advertisement. A Bolshevik conference met, and under Lenin's dictation passed three resolutions. First, it demanded immediate peace without annexation and indemnity, and, so long as the Government refrained from giving them peace, it called on the soldiers to fraternize with their enemies in defiance of discipline. Secondly, in contrast to the other parties who were promising to introduce agrarian reforms, it called on the peasants, without waiting for such schemes, to rise up and seize the land for themselves. Third, it demanded a meeting of the Third International of the Communist revolutionaries of the world.

It was clear that this was an invitation to anarchy and that a government, which wished to remain a government, could not but answer such a challenge by the arrest of Lenin. But there was no government. He had been shrewd enough to issue his challenge at a moment of interregnum. Then, when early in the next month of May a new government was formed, it was one which did not dare to strike. The new government was a coalition. The system of double government was held to have proved itself a failure, and, since the Soviet had the power, it was thought best overtly to associate it with the responsibilities. The Soviet leaders agreed though with some fear and reluctance—and a coalition was formed—still under Prince Lvov's premiership—consisting of fifteen portfolios, of which six

were held by members of the Soviet. Miliukov was dropped, and with him the demand for the conquest of Constantinople. The Bolsheviks alone were not represented in this new government, voted against it in the Soviet and opposed it.

Yet even this government had not yet learnt its lesson—the lesson that it no longer mattered whether the war was offensive or defensive, for the capture of Constantinople or for the defence of Petrograd. Neither the army nor the people were willing to fight for any cause whatsoever. The Coalition Government declared “for defensive and offensive activity to prevent the possible defeat of Russia and her allies.”<sup>18</sup> It was this declaration which was their undoing. For it presented Lenin with his platform. It caused a substantial and increasing section of the population to look to him as their leader, as the one man who made to them an unequivocal promise of peace. It gave him a position in which the Government no more dared to strike at him than the Government of February had dared to strike at the Soviet.

“The one man who made to them an unequivocal promise of peace.” So it was in April, but not in May. On 4-17 May, just a month after Lenin, Trotsky, having obtained his liberation from the Halifax prison, arrived back in Petrograd. His quick mind at once took in that the events of the last two months had wholly changed Lenin’s position. His difference from the other socialists was not now a difference of pedantic and angry quibble on interpretation of a German text-book. It was a living difference on the one issue about which the people really cared—a difference on which Lenin was clearly right and on which he must certainly win so long as his enemies continued in their folly. Trotsky declared for him. He went down to the Soviet and joined with the Bolsheviks in denouncing the Coalition Government. He proclaimed “a new epoch, an epoch of blood and iron

<sup>18</sup> Quoted by Trotsky, vol. I, p. 376.

but not in a struggle of nation against nation but of the suffering and oppressed class against the ruling class."<sup>19</sup>

So Trotsky decided to hitch his wagon to Lenin's star. Whether the firm was to be Lenin and Trotsky, or Trotsky and Lenin, or whether one would fall by the way and leave the room open for the other, the future alone would show. "You see, the great revolution is come," said a Bolshevik leader, Uritzky, "and no matter how intelligent Lenin is, he begins to dim a little beside the genius of Trotsky."<sup>20</sup>

So much for the reason why Trotsky sought the alliance of Lenin. But why did Lenin accept the alliance of Trotsky, the "swine," whom he had so long distrusted? The reason was that in the two months since his return Lenin had effectively succeeded in re-establishing his authority over the party. Kamenev and Stalin had come easily to heel. That was in a way satisfactory, but they had come a little too easily. It was painfully obvious that they accepted Lenin's leadership for the same reason as that for which they had fallen in with the Soviet in the days before his return—because, that is, they were incapable of leadership themselves. As Sukhanov truly and bluntly explained it in his *Memoirs*. "There was nobody and nothing in the party besides Lenin."<sup>21</sup> There was a danger that the Bolshevik experiment would collapse through the sheer incapacity of its members. And, with the prospect of its opportunity at hand, it could not afford to slam the door on talent. Lenin needed Trotsky.

The Coalition Government was still only a provisional government and was pledged to hold elections as soon as possible for a constituent assembly, which should decide Russia's form of future government. But it was not in any great hurry to hold that election. Cutting through the confusions of Russian party terminology, we may say with broad truth that there were now four political parties

<sup>19</sup> Trotsky, *Speeches*.    <sup>20</sup> Quoted by Lunacharsky in *Revolutionary Silhouettes*.

<sup>21</sup> Trotsky, *Russian Revolution*, vol. I, p. 244.

—the Cadets, who had been the Liberal party of the old Tsarist Duma but who now in this strange, new world found themselves on the extreme Right—the Social Revolutionary, or Agrarian, party, and the two Socialist parties, the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks. The first three of those parties were represented in the Coalition Government, but the Cadets held the majority of the portfolios. There had been a number of elections to municipal Dumas, or town councils, and at those elections the Cadets had made but a poor showing and the social revolutionaries had polled the greater number of the votes. If an agrarian party could by paradox win in the towns, it seemed to stand to reason that they would win yet more sweepingly in the country. Now the social revolutionaries, whatever their conduct in the last few months, had in the tsarist days been the advocates of acts of individual terrorism—against Government officials and landlords. And almost all Government officials and landlords belonged to the Cadet party.

So nothing was done, and this gave Lenin the opportunity which he was astute enough to seize. Communism is in reality an urban creed, and Karl Marx in his *Communist Manifesto* had recognized it as the great achievement of industrial capitalism that it had rescued the worker from "the idiocy of rural life."<sup>22</sup> The communist is of the town and is quite without sympathy with the ideals of the peasant. Nevertheless, as Lenin explained to his followers in the *Letter on Tactics*, which he issued at about this time, the vast majority of the inhabitants of Russia were peasants. A party which catered solely for urban tastes had no hopes of success. In order to succeed it was necessary not only to bid against but to outbid the social revolutionaries for peasant support. The happy chance that the social revolutionaries had entered the Government and had therefore condemned themselves to advocating reform by legal means gave him his opportunity.

<sup>22</sup> *Communist Manifesto*.

On 4—17 June the All-Russia Congress of the Soviets of Worker and Social Deputies met. The social revolutionaries and the Mensheviks were able to dominate it, and to the superficial observer it did not seem that the Bolshevik cause was making much progress. Lenin however knew what he was about. Some two weeks before—on 22 May—4 June—he had addressed the first conference of Peasant Deputies. His advocacy of peace obtained him a hearing, for the soldiers were mainly peasants and therefore prepared to listen to the thesis that it was he, rather than the social revolutionaries with their slogan of the “defensive war,” who was the true friend of the peasant. He bade them rise up and seize the land without waiting for the leave of any man, whether old conservative or new revolutionary. Let them not rise up against the landlord alone, but let the poor landless peasant attack also the richer peasant, the kulak who had his piece of land. Thus did Lenin, by dividing the peasants, hope to make certain that the Revolution did not, as in France, establish a strong conservative peasantry, a bulwark against central government. The agrarian policy which communist logic demands is one of state ownership of the land, but this would be likely to be less attractive to the peasantry than the social revolutionary schemes of peasant proprietorship. Therefore Lenin said for the moment less about this, contenting himself with an unstressed proposal for the establishment of model collective farms.

Having issued this appeal and having followed it up with a denunciation of the imperialism of all those who opposed immediate peace, Lenin judged that with June the time had come for that most difficult of all tasks—doing nothing. He would leave things to cook. He went off to Stirssudden for a holiday. “Thanks for the letter,” he wrote<sup>23</sup> in a pleasant letter to his sister. “Please forgive me for not answering before. I am so drunk with the summer rest

<sup>23</sup> Letter 274.

and with doing nothing (I am resting as I have not rested for ages) that I keep putting off all important and unimportant work. . . . We are having a wonderful rest and are thoroughly idle." Thus did he await the Day, and it is impossible to withhold admiration from a man who could write such a letter when he was living so little in any illusion of security that a few days later we find him writing to Kamenev, "Strictly *entre nous*, if I am done in," and giving instructions about the publication of his *Marxism and the State*.<sup>21</sup> He was a brave man.

By July the discontent of the workers at the failure of the Coalition Government to give them peace had grown so strong that there were serious riots in the streets of Petrograd. From February onwards it had been impossible for anyone to govern Russia save in co-operation with the leaders of the workers' soviets. Therefore necessity had compelled the two experiments—the first, that of double government, the second, that of the Coalition in which the Soviet's leaders were represented. These leaders were by no means anxious for the responsibilities of office. They were forced into them by their constituents. For, as often happens in revolutions, the constituents were moving steadily all the time to the Left and now stood far to the Left of those whom they had once elected to represent them. If those constituents demanded a coalition in May, by July, seeing that even a coalition had not brought them peace, they were no longer satisfied even with coalition. They demanded now a purely workers' government a frankly Bolshevik demand. This was avowed repudiation of democracy. In a few months the Russian revolution had passed into democracy and out again—or, if you prefer the phrase, had reverted back again to oligarchy before it had even had the opportunity of trying out its democratic machinery. For the Constituent Assembly had never been elected.

✓ Government by voting is only possible in a society which possesses a reasonable degree of what the Romans called *concordia ordinum*. Its condition is that no considerable section of society is discontented with its lot, or, at any rate, that it is so little discontented that it is prepared to accept redress from the votes of its fellow citizens or to wait until it can obtain the sanction of their votes. It is prepared to deny itself the weapons of force. And, if by contrary there is any considerable section which is determined to appeal to force, then the suppression of that section is the necessary pre-condition of the establishment of government by voting. The only alternative is to surrender the state to the revolting section.

Now in April Lenin had challenged society. By July he was possessed of a sufficient backing for it to be impossible for a government to ignore him. It was necessary either to suppress him or to surrender to him. The governing politicians chose, as their democratic principles compelled them to choose, to suppress him. The decision was repugnant to them, for they were men who had throughout their lives preached a gospel of liberation and had come to power, as they hoped, in order to substitute a government by consent for an old government by force. Yet they were clear-headed enough to see that they had no choice.

But, before striking, they first thought it necessary to put their own house in order. If they were to fight for the cause of democracy against its opponents, it was important that no one should have an excuse for saying that they themselves in any way misrepresented the democracy. Now, as has been said, the majority of the portfolios were held by the Cadets, but it was admitted that throughout the country the majority of the people supported the social revolutionaries. Therefore the Government of Prince Lvov resigned, and there succeeded to it a new government under the leadership of a social revolutionary, Kerensky, the son of Lenin's old schoolmaster. Such a government would,

it was hoped, possess the moral authority for defending democracy against Lenin.

Kerensky was under no illusion about his task. He struck at once. He suppressed *Pravda*, the Bolshevik paper. He attempted to seize all the Bolshevik leaders and was able to arrest Trotsky, Kamenev, Lunacharsky and others. Lenin however, the chief quarry, escaped him. Warned in time he went into hiding in Petrograd, in the house, first of one Aliluev, the father of the lady who was subsequently one of Stalin's wives, then of Emelyanov. He then went to the remote village of Rasliv, twenty miles away from the railway, where he lived alone for six weeks in a hut in the middle of a field. In September, disguised as a stoker, he escaped over the Finnish frontier. The "If's" of history are always tantalizing and one cannot but wonder what would have been the future history of the world, had Kerensky succeeded in laying his hands on Lenin as well as on Trotsky.

For the victory of the Bolsheviks was even yet far from inevitable. The people were for peace but the people were not for Bolshevism. Their advocacy of peace threw onto the Bolshevik side a considerable, and an increasing, minority, but it was still most definitely a minority, and the Government showed itself amply strong enough to arrest the Bolshevik leaders. The evils of anarchy are so patent and so enormous and most men are so sensibly sceptical about forms and systems of government that public opinion will almost always support a vigorous reassertion of authority by an established government, provided only that it is convinced that the anarchical threat of the revolutionary party is a real threat. Kerensky was perhaps not the best man for the task of salvaging a regime. But it is his main crime that he failed. Historians would not have judged him so critically had fortune brought him in the end to victory instead of defeat. Both the army and the people were ready to support him in a campaign for cleaning-up



the Bolsheviks, and he himself was ready to lead such a campaign. Nor is there any reason why it should not have been successful had it not been for the one ever fatal question of peace.

The new government was still unwilling to declare itself for peace. It announced its fidelity to the Allies. Now, ever since the Revolution, the Russian army, while still nominally at war, had in fact done next to no fighting. The army merely stood to its positions along the long line opposite the Austro-German forces. It would defend itself, if attacked, but would not itself attack. And, so long as there was no danger of attack, the Germans could of course hold the front with skeleton forces and transfer the extra troops to the west. As a result the early months of 1917 had not been successful ones for the Western Allies.

Now the Allies were willing to tolerate a short period of Russian inaction as inevitable and something to be borne, from the hope that out of it would emerge a Russia able the more effectively to play her part in the war. But, as the months rolled on, the Allied statesmen began to grow impatient. "Revolutionary defence" might be all very well as a political cry, but as military tactics a policy of defending but never attacking was a puerility. If the Russians intended to play a loyal part, it was argued that they must launch an offensive such as would compel the Germans to transfer troops from the western to the eastern front. The American Government, which had recently come into the war, filled full as it was with democratic enthusiasm, offered a loan of \$75,000,000 on condition that an offensive was launched.<sup>25</sup> It was an offer hard to reject with the poverty of the country what it was.

Prince Lvov had agreed to the offensive and was preparing it at the time of his fall. Kerensky inherited and continued his preparations. The offensive was launched in the early days of July. The military authorities had already spoken

<sup>25</sup> Trotsky, *Russian Revolution*, vol. I, p. 390.

frankly of the improbability of success. Indeed the only chance was if they should find the German trenches so depleted that no resistance was offered. If the Germans fought, they were certain to win, however inferior in numbers. Indeed so miserable was Russian discipline that it was found necessary to abandon any attempt at a co-ordinated plan for the offensive. For it was not worth while working out such a plan when it was quite uncertain who would or who would not obey orders. It was thought best just vaguely to tell everybody to go forward and to hope that some of them would do so. "You are the freest soldiers in the world," said Kerensky to the troops.<sup>26</sup> "... I summon you forward to the struggle for freedom, not as to a feast but to death. We, revolutionaries, have the right to death."

The Germans, as was only to be expected, had taken precautions against some such possibility. For a day or two the Russians were able to advance in a few places simply because the Germans found it convenient to allow them to advance to within range of their guns. Then the Germans hit back, and the Russian army collapsed. On 9-22 July the committees of the 11th army telegraphed to the Government, "A German attack begun on 6 July against the 11th Army is developing into an overwhelming catastrophe. ... In the morale of the troops, only recently induced to move by the heroic efforts of a minority, a sharp and ruinous break has occurred. The aggressive flair-up is rapidly exhausting itself. The majority of the troops are now in a state of increasing disintegration. There is nothing left of authority or obedience. Persuasions and arguments have lost their force. They are answered with threats and sometimes with death."<sup>27</sup>

So ended the Russian war effort. Lenin in his Finnish exile received the news with glee. The Lord had indeed delivered fools and capitalists into his hands. If only Kerensky had stopped the war, he could have beaten Lenin.

<sup>26</sup> Trotsky, *Russian Revolution*, vol. I, chap. xix.      <sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, vol. I, p. 397.

And, if it had not been for the American capitalists, who made the offensive the condition of the loan, he very likely would have done so. Capitalism had destroyed itself by its own folly. Such was the lesson which he preached, day in and day out, in legal and illegal Bolshevik papers and in two pamphlets, the *Lessons of the Revolution* and the *State and Revolution*.

The folly of the capitalists had brought down capitalism to ruin. There was only one thing now that could prevent the triumph of communism—the folly of the communists. It had, it will be remembered, been Lenin's argument ever since 1914 that intelligent capitalists would be pacifists. And there were, he recognized, some intelligent capitalists, though fortunately few. Lenin had always considered that those "opportunistic" socialists who were working for a peace of the *status quo* were, consciously or unconsciously, but the tools of the astuter capitalists. Now it was at this time that preparations were being made for the Stockholm Conference—just such a conference of "opportunistic" socialists as Lenin thought particularly dangerous. And at this time, while Trotsky was in gaol and Lenin in hiding, Kamenev, most disastrously for the communist cause, had got himself free and, from lack of competition, had reassumed that leadership of the communist party for which he had proved himself so unsuited in the previous March. Like a fool—at any rate in Lenin's opinion—Kamenev had argued that, since the communists were in favour of peace, therefore they must be in favour of Stockholm and had accepted invitations to it. Lenin wrote<sup>28</sup> to the Central Committee abroad to repudiate him. "I am absolutely against participation in the Stockholm Conference. I consider Kamenev's action (have you seen *Novaya Zhizn*? You must subscribe to it) to be the height of folly and baseness, and I have written about it to the Central Committee and also to the Press. Fortunately Kamenev was speaking solely for him-

<sup>28</sup> Letter 282.

self and was disavowed by the other Bolsheviks. I consider it would be direct treachery to participate in the Stockholm Conference." But it was very worrying that the fools had no brains.

There was so much to worry him—peace and war, and the folly of communists, the birth of a new world, but along with it all the fact that his sister would not have treatment, though she badly needed it. "You really must go away for treatment. You should take advantage of the present time when you are comparatively free and simultaneously anxious, to cure both your leg and your nerves."<sup>28</sup> And he followed it up with a further letter, in which he urged, "Do not put it off; you must not lose time."<sup>29</sup>

The fiasco of the July offensive had, as has been said, greatly strengthened the hands of the Bolsheviks. The arguments for peace were now irrefutable, and the Bolsheviks reaped the advantage of being the only party that was urging them and the only party that had urged them from the first. In their July conference they felt strong enough publicly to proclaim their determination to overthrow the Kerensky Government. On the other hand the collapse of the offensive was naturally a bitter humiliation to the Russian officer class, and it was not surprising that, like the Germans, they tried to account for their defeat by the explanation of folly and treachery behind the lines. So far from defeat proving that peace was necessary, it was the treacherous talk of peace, they argued, which had destroyed the morale of the army and was responsible for defeat. There was needed a strong government which would restore the death penalty and suppress the Bolshevik traitors.

It is true that mankind, which needs liberty, needs also order, and after a period of anarchy it is always possible to collect a considerable party which is ready to fight for order even if the attainment of it should be at the expense

<sup>28</sup> Letter 281.

<sup>29</sup> Letter 282.

of liberty.' And so the officers, overrating their popularity, were confident that the people would gladly back them, if under the leadership of their commander, Kornilov, they defied Kerensky and demanded the restoration of discipline. "Soberly estimating the situation," wrote Prince Trubetskoy,<sup>31</sup> "it must be acknowledged that the whole commanding staff, an overwhelming majority of the officers and the best of the rank-and-file elements of the army are for Kornilov. To these physical forces it is necessary to add . . . the moral sympathy of all the non-socialist lawyers of the population, and in the lower orders . . . an indifference which will submit to the least blow of the whip." Comparisons between Kornilov and Bonaparte were common, but there were many discrepancies in the parallel, and not the least was that Bonaparte came with a promise of peace; Kornilov demanded a continuation of the war. If the war was to be continued, Kornilov was certainly in the right in demanding from Kerensky an effective reimposition of discipline, but the demand was not one to arouse the interest of the people, for they were determined that the war should not continue. "He wants the power," muttered an old peasant,<sup>32</sup> "and not a word about the land and not a word about ending the war." He was a mutineer, and the reimposition of the death penalty was not an appealing cry with which to raise a mutiny.

The movement was a fiasco. Kornilov could not even get his troops to follow him, and August ended with Kerensky still in power. Superficially it might seem that his position was strengthened, but it was not really so. No government can fight at once and effectively on two opposite fronts. Had Kornilov triumphed the Bolsheviks would have been vigorously repressed, but the failure of Kornilov's attempt inevitably played into the Bolshevik hands. It showed the people that there was a real danger of counter-revolution and suggested to them that they might be safest in the hands

<sup>31</sup> Trotsky, *Russian Revolution*, vol. II, p. 222.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, vol. II, p. 222.

of those who were most vigorous in their opposition to counter-revolution. By defeating Kornilov Kerensky really defeated himself. The sailors of Kronstadt came to Trotsky and the Bolshevik leaders in prison to ask if the time had come for a *coup d'état*. "Not yet," was the answer. "Use Kerensky as a gun-rest to shoot Kornilov. Afterwards we will settle with Kerensky."<sup>33</sup>

"Nothing is easier," said Lenin grimly, "than to make the middle classes destroy themselves."

<sup>33</sup> Trotsky, *Russian Revolution*, vol. II, p. 239.

## CHAPTER IX

### POWER AND PEACE

THERE were numberless elections of one sort and another going on in Russia in those days, and all of them told the same tale—a great growth of Bolshevik strength. Thus, if we compare the votes cast for the Moscow Duma in June and September, we find that the social revolutionary vote fell from 375,000 to 54,000, the Menshevik from 76,000 to 16,000, the Cadet from 109,000 to 101,000, while the Bolshevik vote rose from 75,000 to 198,000.

Yet of all Assemblies in Russia at that date the most important was the Petrograd Soviet. Up till then the Bolsheviks had been by no means in a majority in the Soviet. Yet on 1-14 September the Petrograd Soviet voted by 279 to 115 in favour of a Bolshevik demand for a Government of Workers and Peasants. The pro-Kerensky præsidium offered its resignation, and on 9-22 September the Bolsheviks proposed the election of a new præsidium, in which membership should be in proportion to the new party strength. But this proposal was denounced from both sides. Lenin, still in hiding, denounced his own party for proposing just such a compromise as that by which all the other parties had already betrayed the pure principles of revolution. He was afraid of the muddle-heads in his own party. "In this dangerous moment we must forget all the old accounts," Piatakov, the Ukrainian Bolshevik,<sup>1</sup> had said a few days before on 29 August-11 September ". . . and unite with all revolutionary parties which stand for a decisive struggle against counter-revolution." "We must struggle ruthlessly

<sup>1</sup> Trotsky, *Russian Revolution*, vol. II, p. 321.

against phrases . . . about supporting the Provisional Government, etc., etc., precisely as phrases," answered Lenin.

Tseretelli, the Menshevik, speaking for the old praesidium, also rejected the proposal. He was convinced that the vote of 1-14 September was but a snap-vote and they could get it reversed. Therefore the attempt at compromise failed, and the Bolshevik resolution of lack of confidence in the praesidium was moved. Trotsky, who had just been released from prison on bail, moved it. After a debate of high excitement it was carried by 519 votes to 414, 67 abstaining.

This was, to Lenin's mind, a new situation. It was folly, he had argued at the beginning of the year, to wait for power like a liberal, until a mechanical majority of all the nation was on your side, to wait on what he called "vulgar democracy," but it was also folly to attempt to seize power for the workers before the workers' organization was on your side. Now at last with the victories of September the time had come. The other parties made a last desperate attempt to heal their divisions before the Bolsheviks could profit from them. All parties were committed to the eventual election of a constituent assembly, but elections were at the moment neither possible nor desired. Therefore there was summoned instead a body which was called the Democratic Conference, and in which parties and interests were supposed to be represented in proportion to their popularity in the country. This Democratic Conference selected a number of its members who were to form what was known as the Pre-Parliament. At the same time the Ministry was broadened and a new and last coalition, still under Kerensky, was formed, consisting of six non-socialist and ten socialist members.

The Bolsheviks were invited to send their representatives to this Pre-Parliament, and on 20 September-3 October their Central Committee met to decide whether the invitation should be accepted. Lenin was still in hiding and



not present. Trotsky and Stalin were both opposed to acceptance, but a larger party under Kamenev's leadership was in favour of going to the Pre-Parliament and opposing the Government there. They carried the day by 77 votes to 50, but Lenin three days later came out strongly on Trotsky's side. "We must boycott the Pre-Parliament," he wrote. "We must go out into the Soviets of workers', soldiers' and peasants' deputies, go out into the trade unions, go out in general to the masses. We must summon them to the struggle. We must give them a correct and clear slogan, to drive out the Bonapartist gang of Kerensky with its fake Pre-Parliament. . . . The Mensheviks and social revolutionaries even after the Kornilov events refused to accept our offer of compromise. . . . Ruthless struggle against them! Ruthless expulsion of them from all revolutionary organizations! . . . Trotsky was for the boycott. Bravo, Comrade Trotsky! Boycottism was defeated in the faction of the Bolsheviks who attended the Democratic Conference! Long live the boycott."

It was the truce to the long warfare between Lenin and Trotsky. The hour had come. If they stood together, they could conquer, and, in order to conquer, they were willing to stand together. Kerensky's new coalition government was formed but on the day that it first met there also met the Petrograd Soviet presided over for the first time by its newly elected president, Trotsky. "The news of the formation of the government will be met by the whole revolutionary democracy with one answer, Resign," said Trotsky. "Relying upon this unanimous voice of the authentic democracy, the All-Russian Congress of Soviets will create a genuinely revolutionary government."<sup>2</sup>

The tide was flowing strongly towards the Left, and after Lenin's intervention it was easily possible to win over sufficient votes to obtain a majority for the policy of boycott. The Pre-Parliament dragged on with its futile debates

<sup>2</sup> Trotsky, *Russian Revolution*, vol. II, p. 247.

throughout the early days of October, group blocking group and none able to obtain a majority for its policy. Meanwhile the German navy was battering its way up the Gulf of Finland, had captured the Moon-sund Islands and was threatening Petrograd. The Bolsheviks demanded the summoning of a Congress of all the Soviets of Russia. This demand was accepted, and 20 October-2 November was fixed for its meeting.

Agitation soon however rose up among non-Bolshevik members of the Soviet that its meeting would be "dangerous and undesirable," for it was clearly seen that it would inevitably challenge the authority of the Pre-Parliament. The Bolsheviks, under the leadership of Trotsky and Bukharin, therefore replied by summoning an "unofficial" conference of all the Northern Soviets—those of Petrograd, Moscow, Helsingfors, Reval and Kronstadt. This conference passed a resolution, denouncing a policy of "strangling the Soviet" and making it clear that they would not dissolve as long as there was any doubt of the permission for the meeting of the full Congress.

Nor was it the workers alone who were turning towards Bolshevism. The Bolshevik creed was essentially an urban creed and the party a party of townees. The peasant knew nothing of Marxism. Yet the peasant was the soldier, and the soldier was the peasant. He, too, yearned for peace and he, too, had learnt in the army from his masters the fatal lesson that the last word goes to the sharpest sword. He had heard the invitation of Lenin, bidding him not wait for laws and resolutions but rise up and take the land. In province after province of Russia this autumn he accepted that invitation. The Russian peasant was not a Bolshevik either by acceptance of Bolshevik leadership or by intellectual comprehension of the programme, but he could no longer be counted on to fight against Bolsheviks. "The political freedom of a peasant," wrote Trotsky with characteristic townee cynicism, "means in practice the ability

to choose between different city parties." The peasant preferred Lenin and peace to Kerensky and the Allies.

From Kerensky's point of view the peasant could no longer be relied on. No more could the soldiers. In this same October the garrison of Petrograd, imitating the workers, organized a military revolutionary committee. And when Kerensky, seeing that the soldiers would do him more harm than good in face of a Bolshevik rising, tried on a pretext to move them out of Petrograd, they refused to go and declared that henceforth they took their orders from the revolutionary committee and not from officers or government.

In all these events Lenin had played no part. He was compelled to remain still in hiding and occupied his enforced leisure in finishing his *State and Revolution*. The most that he dared to do was to come back from Finland to the Petrograd suburb of Viborg. But he was keenly watching the developments. It had been the habit of those revolutionaries who did not really wish for revolution eternally to harp on the complexity of the state machine—to doubt whether the revolutionaries were possessed of sufficient experience and capacity to manage it—to ask whether the cause would not suffer from an attempt that proved a fiasco. Such talk Lenin brushed impatiently away. In his pamphlet *Can the Bolsheviks Hold Power*<sup>3</sup> he dismissed in a withering sentence those revolutionaries who "would be ready to recognize the social revolution if history led up to it as peacefully, tranquilly, smoothly and accurately as a German express train approaches a station; the conductor opens the doors of the car and announces, 'Station Social Revolution; everyone get out.'"<sup>4</sup> "We have a machine," he cried. "That is the Soviets." While the Soviets were not yet Bolshevik, the hour to strike had not arrived. Now with October it had come. There was an opportunity that would not recur; the workers were calling for the Bolsheviks.

<sup>3</sup> Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, vol. I, p. 289.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, vol. I, p. 288.

The widespread peasant riots would prevent any effective resistance by the Government, and the arrest of the Italian socialists and revolts in the German navy proved (as he argued—of course wrongly) that not only Russia but all Europe was ready for revolution, if men could be found brave enough to begin it. "We are on the threshold of world proletarian revolution," he wrote in his pamphlet *The Crisis is Ripe*.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand the tide would not long remain at the height. If the Bolsheviks missed it the workers would soon turn from them as charlatans, as they had already turned from the Mensheviks and social revolutionaries—turn either to yet another party, to the anarchists perhaps, or else to mere despair. "Having got a majority in the Soviets of both capitals," he wrote to the Central Committee, "the Bolsheviks can and should seize the state power in their hands. . . . The crisis is ripe. The whole future of the international workers' revolution for socialism is at stake. The crisis is ripe. . . . The revolution is done for, if the Government of Kerensky is not overthrown by proletarians and soldiers in the near future."

The trouble was that he could not be in Petrograd himself and he by no means trusted those who had in their hands the leadership of the party. The vote to participate in the Prc-Parliament had shown how lacking they were either in will or intelligence. Trotsky and he, almost alone, saw the opportunity, and it was this that threw the two into alliance. With some of the other recent recruits to the party he was by no means pleased, but "it goes without saying that . . . nobody would quarrel with such a candidacy as, for example, that of L. D. Trotsky."<sup>6</sup>

The Congress of Soviets was to meet towards the end of the month, and those who were against action argued that nothing should be done until its meeting. If we wait,

<sup>5</sup> Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, vol. I, p. 290.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted by Trotsky, *Russian Revolution*.

answered Lenin, in *The Crisis is Ripe*, the psychological moment will slip by. Such a policy is "either complete idiotism or complete treachery." If the Central Committee would not act he offered his resignation from it. "Delay is a crime. Waiting for the Congress of Soviets is a childish toying with formalities, a shameful toying with formalities, betrayal of the revolution."<sup>7</sup> "In the upper circles of the party," he wrote, "a wavering is to be observed, a sort of dread of the struggle for power, an inclination to replace this struggle with resolutions, protests and compromises."<sup>8</sup>

A wavering there was indeed. They did not want a revolution. On the other hand they did not want a full breach with Lenin, because they were afraid of the vengeance which Kerensky would take on them should the Bolshevik party disintegrate and they be no longer men to fear. Lenin came up secretly to Petrograd on 8-21 October and, in defiance of the Central Committee, addressed the Soviet's Bolshevik delegates to the Conference of Northern Soviets in favour of immediate revolution. Yet the Central Committee was unwilling to hit back at him. Therefore on 10-23 October there took place the famous meeting between Lenin and his colleagues of the Committee. To escape the police the meeting was held in the flat of Sukhanov, a Menshevik. Sukhanov had a Bolshevik wife, who undertook to keep her husband away from home while his unknown and uninvited guests debated his destruction around his dining-room table. Lenin came with his beard shaved off and disguised with a wig and spectacles. They debated for ten hours, refreshed by bread, tea and sausages. It began with a report from Sverdlov of the military situation and of the means which the general staff were concocting for their suppression. Then Lenin spoke, calling for insurrection—"one of those tense and passionate impromptu speeches, saturated with a desire to instil into the objecting,

<sup>7</sup> Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, vol. I, p. 289.

<sup>8</sup> Trotsky, *Russian Revolution*, vol. III, p. 198.

the wavering, the doubtful his will, his confidence, his courage."<sup>9</sup> The speech had its effect. Few were willing to defy him to his face. Lenin wrote out a resolution in favour of insurrection with the stub of a pencil on the ruled page of a child's exercise-book. Ten voted for it, and only two—Kamenev and Zinoviev—against.

The resolution was a triumph for Lenin. Yet he was well aware that Kamenev and Zinoviev spoke for a considerable section among the intellectuals of the party and for some who, under Lenin's eye, had voted against them. The next day Zinoviev and Kamenev distributed a pamphlet to the members of the party, justifying their stand. Lenin returned to his place of hiding. Days passed, and, resolution or no resolution, nothing was done. Lenin had no intention of allowing the opportunity thus to evaporate and insisted on another meeting of the Central Committee being held in the Petrograd suburb of Lesnoi on the 16th–29th. It was very evident that there were others besides Zinoviev and Kamenev—Miliutin, the economist, for instance—who did not intend that there should be an insurrection if they could help it. It was the soldier, Ensign Krylenko, the man who was afterwards to be Bolshevik commander-in-chief, who forced the issue. He bluntly announced that all this debate whether there should be a revolution, all this talk about fixing the date of insurrection was academic and fatuous. At this very moment the Government was ordering the troops to leave Petrograd and the troops were refusing to go. "It is not necessary to worry about who shall begin, for the thing is already begun."<sup>10</sup> Unless they were going to abandon the soldiers they must support them.

"We have no machine of insurrection. The enemy's machine is far stronger," answered Kamenev,<sup>11</sup> but once more Lenin was able to carry the resolution in favour of insurrection, with only Kamenev and Zinoviev opposing

<sup>9</sup> Trotsky, *Russian Revolution*, vol. III, p. 148.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, vol. III, p. 159.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

and, this time, with three abstentions. Yet again the opposition was more considerable than would appear from the figures, for another resolution, that "any action before a conference with the Bolshevik section of the Congress of Soviets"—that is, until after Lenin's "psychological moment" was passed—"is inadmissible," was able to muster six votes against fifteen.

Once more Zinoviev and Kamenev followed up their opposition by a public declaration on the next day—this time, in Gorky's paper. The policy of Lenin was, wrote Kamenev,<sup>12</sup> "an inadmissible step ruinous to the proletariat and the Revolution." He offered his resignation from the Central Committee, while at the same time Lenin wrote demanding his expulsion. "Kamenev's trick at the session of the Petrograd Soviet was something positively vile," wrote Lenin. It was "plain, petty cheating."<sup>13</sup> Zinoviev and Kamenev were "heroes of parliamentary illusion and parliamentary cretinism."<sup>14</sup> With bitter sarcasm he parodied their argument. "It is more reasonable not to rise up, because, if they shoot us down, the world will lose such splendid, reasonable, ideal internationalists. We will show our good sense. We will pass a resolution of sympathy with German rebels and reject uprising in Russia. This will be real, reasonable internationalism."

Zinoviev, and Lunacharsky who was by now acting with him, replied with somewhat strange letters, arguing that the difference between Lenin and Kamenev was not fundamental, and, when the letters were published by the Central Organ, there was attached to them the editorial note, "We in our turn express the hope that with the declaration made by Zinoviev (and also the declaration of Kamenev in the Soviet) the question may be considered settled. The sharpness of tone of Lenin's article does not alter the fact that in fundamentals we remain of one opinion."

<sup>12</sup> Trotsky, *Russian Revolution*, vol. III, p. 161.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, vol. III, p. 162.

<sup>14</sup> Letters in *Russian Press*

Who was the author of this editorial note? The editors of the Central Organ were Sokolnikov, afterwards Ambassador in London and then shot, and Stalin. Sokolnikov at once repudiated all knowledge and responsibility and, it is reasonable to presume, was able, so long as he was alive, to prove that he had no knowledge or responsibility. The author was Stalin, who had up till then concealed his hand but who then came out in open opposition to Lenin and Trotsky and against the acceptance of Kamenev's resignation. The resignation was accepted by five votes to three over Stalin's opposition, and Stalin also opposed a resolution, forbidding Zinoviev and Kamenev to carry on agitation against the policy of the Central Committee. As Stalin had already voted in favour of insurrection, his conduct may appear extraordinary. But there is little doubt that he thought it likely that, resolution or no resolution, the revolution would not in fact come off. If so, the influence of Lenin and Trotsky must indubitably decline, and that of Zinoviev and Kamenev increase. Stalin wanted to have friends at court, whoseever the court. "The art of leadership," wrote Stalin,<sup>16</sup> "is a serious matter. One must not lag behind a movement, because to do so is to become isolated from the masses. But one must not rush ahead, for to rush ahead is to lose contact with the masses. He who wishes to lead a movement must conduct a fight on two fronts—against those who lag behind and those who rush ahead." Or, better still, let those who lag behind fight those who rush ahead and then yourself come in on the winning side.

When every report had been studied and collated, it still remained largely a matter of guess-work how the workers would respond to a call to insurrection. It is idle to blame those whose nerve failed them when the moment came and who manufactured for themselves excuses for procrastination, but it would be ungenerous not to pay

<sup>16</sup> Quoted by Gunther, *Inside Europe*, p. 427.



tribute to the fanatical courage of Lenin and Trotsky who were prepared to carry the matter through. Both of them knew that they were certainly risking their lives and, whatever else we may think of them, they were at least brave men. Yet the truth really lay with Krylenko. There was no going back whether for hero or poltroon. It was no longer a question whether there be an insurrection. There would be an insurrection anyway. The question was whether the Bolsheviks would lead it or be destroyed by it. There would be an insurrection not because the people demanded communism but because they demanded peace. On 23 October–5 November representatives of all the units at the front filed past the Petrograd Soviet, bidding it seize power. "The trenches will support you." Seize power, they said, and make peace. Otherwise we will march to the rear and "destroy all the parasites who want to keep on fighting for another ten years." It was an invitation, but the sort of invitation that was also a threat.

Trotsky at any rate was ready to accept the invitation. Jumping to his feet, he poured out his torrential rhetoric. "The Soviet regime will give everything that is in the country to the poor and to the people in the trenches. You, boorzhui, have two coats—hand over one to the soldier who is cold in the trenches. You have warm boots? Sit at home; the worker needs your boots. Who will stand for the cause of the workers and the peasants to the last drop of blood?" A yell of assent broke out. A forest of hands shot up. "Let this voting of yours," cried Trotsky, "be your vow, with all your strength, at any sacrifice, to support the Soviet, which has taken on itself the great task of bringing the victory of the Revolution to the end, and of giving land, peace and bread."<sup>16</sup>

The Government decided to accept the challenge of the soldiers and on the evening of 24 October–6 November they ordered the arrest both of the Military Revolutionary

<sup>16</sup> Sukhanov, *Reminiscences of the Revolution*, vol. I, p. 92.



Trotsky



Committee and of Trotsky and the other Bolsheviks who were out on bail. The question whether the soldiers and the Bolsheviks should act together was thus solved for them by Kerensky. The next day, when the attempt was made to carry out these orders, there was an insurrection. It was found that Kerensky had no organized troops, obedient to him, and, when Lenin came up to Petrograd from Viborg for a meeting of the Petrograd Soviet that afternoon, he was met by Trotsky with the news that he was master of the city. Without the shedding of a drop of blood Petrograd had gone over to the Bolsheviks. By the end of the day only the Winter Palace, where the Government was assembled, refused to acknowledge the Bolsheviks. The next morning Kerensky fled from Petrograd, accompanied by a car from the American Embassy flying the American flag. In the evening the Winter Palace was stormed and the other ministers were captured.

Lenin had been the strategist who saw that the moment to strike had come. But in the striking of the blow he had no hand. The credit of execution is Trotsky's. In proof of that we have the evidence of him who is of all men living the least biased in Trotsky's favour. "All the work of practical organization of the insurrection," wrote Stalin in *Pravda*,<sup>17</sup> "was conducted under the immediate leadership of the President of the Petrograd Soviet, Comrade Trotsky. It is possible to declare with certainty that the swift passing of the garrison to the side of the Soviet, and the bold execution of the work of the Military Revolutionary Committee the party owes principally and first of all to Comrade Trotsky."

25 October—7 November—the day of the Battle of the Winter Palace—happened also to be the day of the meeting of the Congress of the Soviets in Smolny. It was as representatives of that Congress that the Bolsheviks claimed to be fighting, and their claim to represent it was not unjustified,

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Introduction to Trotsky's *Russian Revolution*.

for of its 650 members 390 accepted the Bolshevik policy. (In the last Congress in June they had only some 100 members out of 832—a sign of the shift of opinion.) Out of the 650, 505 voted for a transfer of all power to the Soviets. A *praesidium* was elected, consisting of 14 Bolsheviks with Lenin at their head, 7 social revolutionaries, 3 Mensheviks and an internationalist.

While the *praesidium* was being elected, Lenin, still in his wig and spectacles, was sitting in a passage-way outside the hall. Dan, the Menshevik leader, and one Skobelev walked by. They stared at him and passed on. It was clear that they had recognized him, and, as he did not wish to be known, he retired to a near-by house to an unfurnished room, where he lay down on some blankets and cushions. Trotsky came and lay down beside him, and they talked together.

Meanwhile in the Congress the debate waxed hot. The Bolsheviks were the masters of Petrograd, but they were by no means yet the masters of Russia. Their triumph was far from assured, and it might well be that they would fall in a few days, and the spoils go to those who had had the courage to stand out against them in their hour of success. The leader of the opposition to them was Martov. Not foreseeing, as none did foresee, the complete and sudden collapse of the Government, he denounced the criminal adventure of the Bolsheviks, prophesying that its only result would be to start a civil war of the Left as a result of which the counter-revolutionaries, as *tertiū gaudentes*, would slip back to power, as the saviours of the country from anarchy. Others, too, called for negotiations with the Provisional Government. A message came to Trotsky, who was lying in the empty room with Lenin. He must come and answer Martov.

Trotsky strode down to the hall, his beard pushed out before him like a signal. He elbowed his way up to the platform through the crowded, smoke-filled, smelling room.

"Our insurrection has conquered," he yelled at Martov, "and now you propose to us, Renounce your victory; make a compromise. With whom? I ask. With whom ought we to make a compromise? With that pitiful handful that just went out?"—the representatives of the Right—"... Haven't we seen them through and through? There is no longer anybody in Russia who is for them. Are the millions of workers and peasants represented in this Congress, whom they are ready now as always to turn over for a price to the mercies of the bourgeoisie, are they to enter a compromise with these men? No, a compromise is no good here. To those who have gone out and to all who make like proposals, we must say, 'You are pitiful, isolated individuals, you are bankrupt; your role is played out. Go where you belong from now on—into the rubbish can of history.'"<sup>18</sup>

"Then we will go," cried Martov in answer to this Dantesque denunciation, and pushed his way out.

At two o'clock in the morning a half-hour recess was announced. And when at half-past two they reassembled, it was clear from the first that they were in the company of big events. Kamenev, the President, read out a telegram. "The Winter Palace has been captured and with it all the ministers of the Provisional Government except Kerensky." Hard behind came another piece of news. The battalion—the 3rd Bicycle Battalion—which Kerensky had sent from the front to restore order had gone over to the Bolsheviks. A delegate from that battalion had indeed arrived in the hall. He was pushed up onto the platform, and, amid cheers and cries, announced, "among all the bicyclers there is not one man to be found who would consent to take action against his brothers." Then came Krylenko with a further telegram. The 12th Army at the northern front had formed a military revolutionary committee and refused to march against the Bolsheviks. "Cheers," reports

<sup>18</sup> Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, vol. I, p. 321.

the American, John Reed, "men weeping, embracing each other." Lunacharsky jumped to his feet and proposed, "The Congress resolves, That all power in the localities go over to the Soviets." It was carried with two opposed and twelve abstaining. At six a.m. the Congress adjourned. The heavy-eyed delegates stumbled out into the black autumn streets. Puddles and filth strewn the ill-paved streets of the city slum. For light there was here and there the glowing brazier of some street-worker or sentinel, and in the distance from the Winter Palace came intermittently the sound of gunfire—no one quite knew why.<sup>10</sup>

The old Government had fallen, but it was not yet quite settled what new government should take its place. The next day the Central Committee of the party had a meeting, and its business was to agree to Lenin's proposal "to form a government of Bolsheviks only." It did so. That evening at nine o'clock the Congress of the Soviets met again. Kamenev announced that there were three questions to be settled—those of peace, land and government. He gave the floor to Lenin. The dramatic moment had come. Lenin had been in hiding during the last four months, during which the power of the Bolshevik name had so tremendously grown. Before that were the years of exile. Hardly any present had ever seen him. To all he was an almost legendary figure—one whom they had heard spoken of as the author of all their evils or as the one hope of deliverance. He rose, came up to the reading-desk, and stood there, gripping its side with his hands. "A short stocky figure," records John Reed,<sup>20</sup> "with a big head set down in his shoulders, bold and bulging. Little eyes, a snubbish nose, wide generous mouth and heavy chin; clean shaven now but already beginning to bristle with the well-known beard of his past and future. Dressed in shabby clothes, the trousers much too long for him." The tobacco-smoke, which always afflicted

<sup>10</sup> Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, vol. I, p. 322.

<sup>20</sup> Reed, *Ten Days that Shook the World*, p. 90.

him with a nausea of the stomach lay heavily on the air, but the excitement was too tense for retching. A tremendous ovation burst out, died down and rose up again and yet again. It lasted for several minutes. Lenin stood, winking at it with his little Mongol eyes. When at last there was quiet, he said, "We shall now proceed to construct the socialist order."<sup>21</sup>

Even those who are least sympathetic to him can hardly fail to be moved by the high dramatic triumph of that moment. Yet all was not done. Rather all was still to do. He knew very well that the card with which he had conquered was the card of peace. It was that card which he must now play. "The workers' and peasants' government created by the revolution of 24-25 October and resting upon the Soviets of the workers', soldiers' and peasants' deputies, proposes to all the warring peoples and their governments to open immediate negotiations for a just, democratic peace." All secret treaties were to be published; all secret diplomacy was to be abolished, and an immediate armistice of three months was proposed. "Now we have overthrown the Government of the bankers," he added. There was some debate, and then Kamenev asked all in favour of the proclamation to raise their delegates' cards. Only one dared to oppose it, and he withdrew his opposition. In enthusiasm the delegates jumped to their feet and burst into the "Internationale." All sang with Lenin at their head, and there were cries from a delegate of "Long live Lenin!" and the cheers were given again and again, as Lenin, still at the reading-desk, stood looking down the hall.

So much for peace. Next came land. This, too, was important. For the vast majority of the population of Russia was peasant, and it had been the constant criticism of socialism that it had nothing to offer to the peasant. Lenin had seen clearly from the start that, if Bolshevism

<sup>21</sup> Trotsky, *Russian Revolution*, vol. III, p. 318.



was to survive, it must somehow obtain the support of the peasants. It must obtain this support even, if need be, at a sacrifice of socialist principles. So Lenin moved, "The landlord's property in the land is annulled immediately and without any indemnity whatever. The landlord, appanage, monastery and Church estates with all their goods and chattels are given in charge of the town land committees and country soviets of peasant deputies until the Constituent Assembly. The confiscated property is placed as a national possession under the protection of the local soviets. The land of the rank-and-file peasants and rank-and-file Cossacks is protected against confiscation."<sup>22</sup>

This was not socialism. As Rosa Luxemburg truly complained, equal distribution of land was nothing to do with socialism. Lenin was aware of that; he said so again and again in his earlier writings against the Narodniki. It was frank opportunism. He needed the support of the peasants. The time might come when he no longer needed them, and then the advance might continue. "We must not ignore," he said frankly,<sup>23</sup> "the resolutions of the lower ranks of the people, even though we are not in agreement with them."

There remained only the question of government. Lenin's demand for a purely Bolshevik government was accepted, and the Council of People's Commissars was nominated. Lenin, head of the Government, without portfolio; Miliutin, Agriculture; Nogin, Commerce and Industry; Trotsky, Foreign Affairs; Lomov, Justice; Stalin, Nationalities; Antonov-Ovseenko, Krylenko and Dybenko, Defence; Shlyapnikov, Labour; Lunacharsky, Education; Theodorovitch, Provisions; Globov, Posts and Telegraphs. "As Kamenev read the list of the Commissars," wrote Reed, there were "bursts of applause after each name, Lenin's and Trotsky's especially."

<sup>22</sup> Trotsky, *Russian Revolution*, vol. III, p. 325.

<sup>23</sup> *The Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets*, p. 73.

Kerensky, it was discovered, had established himself at Pskov. No one knew what forces he had at his disposal, and, under Krylenko's direction, workers were hastily sent out to dig trenches and to put up barbed wire defences in the outskirts of Petrograd. On 28 October-9 November there was some fighting within the city, as a gang of Junkers seized the Telephone Building and made prisoner Antonov-Ovseenko, the Commissar, who happened to be within. However they were easily suppressed, and Ovseenko released. But in the meanwhile Kerensky had got hold of Krasnov, the general in command at Pskov, and persuaded him to march on Petrograd. Krasnov was an officer of the old-fashioned school, who had been a supporter of Kornilov and had no great opinion of Kerensky. When Kerensky, to whom all was lost save pomposity, said to him fatuously, "General, I appoint you commander of the army marching on Petrograd. I congratulate you, General," Krasnov laughed in his face.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless he accepted the commission, and by the time that the Junker rising had been suppressed had taken advantage of it to advance as far as Tsarkoe Selo, a short train ride from Petrograd. The Red Guard there took to its heels after two shots had been fired; the regular garrison maintained a sullen neutrality. It looked possible that Krasnov, although he had only 700 troops, might even enter Petrograd and expel the Bolsheviks. However at Pulkovo the Red troops were induced to make a stand and Krasnov had to retreat to Gatchina.

The man who persuaded the Red troops to fight for their own cause was not any of the Bolshevik leaders but an old army officer, Colonel Walden. "It could not have been that he sympathized with us, because he understood nothing," said Trotsky.<sup>25</sup> But he so deeply hated and despised Kerensky that he was willing to go out and persuade

<sup>24</sup> Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, vol I, p. 330.

<sup>25</sup> Article, "Reminiscences of the October Revolution," in *Proletarian Review*, 1822, No. 10, pp. 61-2.

the troops to stand against him, not knowing at all what was the regime that was being substituted for Kerensky's.

Krasnov's Cossacks had no stomach for fighting. As soon as they saw that they were likely to meet with opposition, they mutinied against and arrested their general, and Dybenko, the Bolshevik military commissar, was able to arrange with them a treaty by which, in return for a promise that Lenin and Trotsky would be dismissed from the Government, they agreed to seize and hand over Kerensky. The Bolsheviks neither kept nor ever intended to keep their promise, while Kerensky, disguised as a sailor, succeeded in slipping away from his troops and soon afterwards, thanks to Mr. Bruce Lockhart, escaped from the country. Krasnov however was handed over, though he was soon after released and made his way down to the south of Russia where he was afterwards to play his part in the White wars. But the chance of a quick destruction of the Bolshevik regime had faded.

Troops elsewhere were no more anxious to fight for the Provisional Government than were those of Krasnov. In Moscow, contrary to the experience of 1905 and to Lenin's prophecy, the Junkers put up a better fight than they had in Petrograd. Yet by the first of the next month Moscow had passed over to the Bolsheviks. So, too, without co-ordinated plan, did almost all the other cities of the Empire. After a few weeks the Bolsheviks found themselves masters of substantially all Russia except the Western Ukraine, where a Ukrainian Nationalist Rada had established itself at Kiev, the Don Cossack country, which remained faithful to its Ataman, General Kaledin—and, of course, the territory in the occupation of the Central Powers. In many rural districts conditions were rather those of anarchy than of any effective government.

In Petrograd itself the Government, as soon as it had won its military victory, found itself faced with a general strike of all its civil servants and of black-coated workers, such

as the bank-employees. It replied by nationalizing the banks and refusing to allow anybody to withdraw more than 250 roubles a week. When Podvoisky, the chief of the Military Committee, offered his resignation, Lenin replied,<sup>26</sup> "I shall hand you over to the party court and we shall shoot you. I order you to continue working and not to hinder me in my work." Meanwhile Lenin was being pressed by people both within and without the Government to broaden its basis by including non-Bolsheviks. In keeping with his character he refused, and on 4-17 November Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov, Nogin and Miliutin resigned from the Central Committee in protest against his refusal. They could not, they said, countenance "the preservation of a purely Bolshevik Government by means of political terror." Lenin replied with a characteristic gibe at those who "let themselves be frightened by the bourgeoisie." The proletariat "threw aside the deserters with the ease of a railroad train throwing off chips."<sup>27</sup>

Lenin was not the man to weaken unity by doling out portfolios to Mensheviks, whose day his shrewd political instinct told him was done. He disliked coalitions, but he was a realist, and, if it was necessary to compromise in order to conquer, he was willing to compromise. And he saw from the first that the regime could only conquer if it was careful to keep friendly with the peasants. Therefore, rejecting Kamenev's desire for inclusion of Mensheviks, he was prepared to accept the inclusion of a few members of his own choosing from the peasants' party—the social revolutionaries. He therefore appeared before, and addressed, the Peasants' Congress which met in the middle of November, and three Left social revolutionaries were subsequently included in the Government.

All through November the Government was in daily session in the converted girls' school of Smolny. Lenin, with a stop-watch before him, listened to the opinions of his

<sup>26</sup> Fox, *Lenin*, p. 250.

<sup>27</sup> Marcu, *Lenin*.

colleagues and called them abruptly to a halt if their eloquence seemed likely to run over a few minutes. He passed to experts little slips of paper, on which a question was written, and demanded that the answer be squeezed on to the same slip. Decree after decree poured out. Sometimes these decrees announced immediate policy. Sometimes they defined objectives, which even Lenin's enthusiasm recognized as more distant. The decrees of the latter sort were important, he argued, because it was quite possible that the Government would quickly collapse. If so, it was important that it should leave behind it a memory and proclamation of its policy, to be the rallying force of the revolutionaries of the next revolution.

There is little doubt that in Petrograd, at any rate, the Government was during its first month immensely popular. It brought with it the promise of peace, and peace was to bring plenty in its train. It is true that there were as yet no signs of plenty. On the contrary the bread-ration was drastically cut from half a pound to an eighth of a pound a day. But at least it was cut for everybody. In Kerensky's Petrograd, as in so many cities of distress, the hunger of the many was made a hundred times more galling by the luxury of the few by its side. Lenin stopped that like a crack of a whip. If there was poverty, there was poverty for all. The bourgeois lived worse than the workers, and Lenin himself and the other Bolshevik leaders no jot better. "Where are the wealthy," *Pravda* could ask,<sup>28</sup> "the fashionable ladies, the rich restaurants and private mansions, the beautiful entrances, the lying newspapers, all the corrupted golden life? All swept away; you cannot meet on the street a rich barin in a fur coat, reading the *Russki Vedomosti*. There is no *Russki Vedomosti*, no fur coat for the barin; he is living in Ukraina or in the Kuban or is exhausted, emaciated from living on a ration of the third class; he has lost the appearance of a barin."

<sup>28</sup> *Izvestia*, No. 229 for 1917.

Yet none understood better than Lenin that the nation would not be satisfied for long with a diet of mere hatred. Peace, which had been promised, must be achieved. A delegation was sent off to arrange an armistice with the Germans. At its head was a certain Schneur, a revolutionary, who, as Lenin later discovered, had in the past offered to sell his comrades' secrets to the Tsarist police but whose price had been refused because the police felt no confidence that he would tell them the truth when he had taken their money.

The peace negotiations proper opened at Brest-Litovsk on 19 November—2 December. Joffe was head of the Bolshevik delegation, and in order to show that the dictatorship of the proletariat had at last arrived, a worker and a peasant were detailed to accompany him (although in fact the peasant was kept dead drunk all through the negotiations in order to make sure that he did not interrupt).

Meanwhile in Petrograd the maintenance of order had been entrusted to the All-Russian Commission for Struggle with Counter-Revolution and Sabotage, under Dzerzhinsky—the body which was afterwards to acquire the shorter and more dreaded name of Cheka. Lenin gave himself to the task of depriving the rich of their riches. The right to own large houses was abolished. A Supreme Economic Council was established which had the power to confiscate industrial enterprises. All banks were nationalized. All the debts of the Russian Government were repudiated. All debts owed to foreign capitalists were repudiated “unconditionally and without exception.”

Lenin toyed with various plans for the scaling down of private debts in such a way as to impoverish the rich, but eventually decided that the simplest plan was that of “debauching the currency”—of gigantic inflation. The objection to such a scheme in normal countries—that, if money is rapidly losing its value, no one will save—was of course no objection at all to Lenin. He did not intend

any private person to save. A man's income was to be his wages and salary and that income was to be spent on living. Capital works would be undertaken by the Government.

The notion that a Communist Government would survive in Russia side by side with capitalist governments elsewhere was not even considered. Lenin was utterly confident that the world revolution was imminent, and there was no question but that the Russian Government would play a great part in helping that revolution. "The Council of People's Commissars considers it necessary to come to the aid of the Left, internationalist wing of the workers' movement of all countries with all possible resources, including money, quite irrespective of whether these countries are at war or in alliance with Russia or maintain a neutral position," ran a proclamation signed by Lenin and Trotsky. And there met in Moscow in the early months of 1918 a conference of people from all countries in the world who were prepared "to carry on a revolutionary struggle against their own governments for immediate peace and support of the Russian Bolshevik revolution and the Soviet regime."<sup>10</sup>

Lenin had always had on his lips the Marxian dictum that government was "an executive committee for managing the affairs of the governing class" and therefore, as long as the enemy class was in power, he was ready to join in the outcry for liberal reforms from such a government—for free speech, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, a constitution and the rest. For to make such concessions would weaken the Government. But the very fact that such concessions had been demanded from a capitalist government was, to Lenin's mind, crowning proof that it would be folly for the communists to concede them when they themselves came to power. So he suppressed hostile newspapers, and, if he had had his way, would never have summoned that Constituent Assembly which he had for

<sup>10</sup> *Pravda*, 1 January 1919.

so long demanded from Kerensky. Yet others in the party argued that the Bolsheviks would earn a reputation for hypocrisy if they did not carry out their promises. Lenin was amazed at the bourgeois folly of such reasoning. Yet he allowed himself to be persuaded, and elections took place in the middle of November. The voting seems to have been fairly free. The Bolsheviks polled some nine million votes, the social revolutionaries sixteen million, conservative groups about three million. Mensheviks and Cadets were washed out, polling only about a million each.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks had by then gone so far that it would have been absurd to have expected them idly to have laid down power because of a popular vote. They had either to conquer or to die. A dignified position in retirement or on a front opposition bench was not for them. The country in general had declared against them. But the social revolutionaries were themselves divided into left and right, and the strategic points, the large towns, were for Bolshevism. They possessed, as Lenin put it, "an overwhelming preponderance of force at the decisive moment in the decisive points."<sup>30</sup> If there was no faltering the chance of victory was therefore good. With a somewhat splendid insolence Lenin announced that "the sole chance of a painless solution of the crisis which has arisen as a result of the lack of correspondence between the election to the Constituent Assembly and the will of the people" lay in "an unreserved statement of the Constituent Assembly about recognition of the Soviet regime."<sup>31</sup> Seizing all the Cadet deputies, he threw them into prison as "enemies of the people."<sup>32</sup>

Lenin meant what he said, and he was given an excuse for meaning it. On 1-14 January he was shot at by a social revolutionary, while returning from a meeting in his car. On the 5th-18th the Assembly met, and it was from the

<sup>30</sup> Article, "Elections to the Constituent Assembly and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat."

<sup>31</sup> *Pravda*, 26 December 1917.

<sup>32</sup> *Izvestia*, No. 299 for 1917.



first evident that, in spite of the absence of the Cadets, the anti-Bolsheviks were in the majority. But it was as evident that among the guards, the soldiers, sailors and workmen who filled the galleries, Bolsheviks were in a majority. Nor did the galleries hesitate to interrupt with jeers, whistles and cat-calls, as the mood took them. Futility drivelled on into the night, and then, as Chernov, the anti-Bolshevik President, was trying to read out a decree, a rough black-bearded sailor, an anarchist called Zheleznnyak, elbowed his way through the members and up on to the rostrum and, tapping Chernov on the shoulder, bade him cut it short "since the guard is tired."<sup>33</sup> In nervous hurry Chernov declared the Assembly adjourned until the next day. But, when Petrograd woke up the next day, it found the way to the Tauride Palace barred by a strong guard and a curt notice posted up that the Constituent Assembly was dissolved because it was serving "only as a cover for struggle of bourgeois counter-revolution for the overthrow of the power of the Soviets."<sup>34</sup> There had been drafted into Petrograd a Lettish regiment, who could be trusted to have no Russian political interests that might interfere with their aim. Thus ended Russia's brief five hours of democracy, and she turned back again to the ancient ways. We must take up, said Lenin with stark candour, "the burden of Peter the Great."

Lenin had no tinge of the liberal's faith in the sacredness of elected bodies. But he did not fight them blindly like a Charles X of France. He fought them like a Bismarck, picking the time when they could be defied with impunity. This, he surely knew, was such a time. For, though the majority of the community was not yet willing to fight for Bolshevism, yet the bribe of the land effectively prevented any but a small minority from being willing to fight against it. The Cossacks already had their land under the old regime, and therefore Lenin's bribe had less appeal to them. But even among them Kaledin's rule soon began to

<sup>33</sup> Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, vol. I, p. 370.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*

disintegrate, until Kaledin shot himself in despair. In the Ukraine, too, only a minority of the population was prepared to fight for a nationalism that put them in opposition to the Bolshevik programme, and there is little doubt that there, too, had matters been left to themselves, the Rada would have fallen. The only effective armed Russian opposition to the Bolsheviks in these first winter months was a little band of a few thousand, consisting almost entirely of ex-Tsarist officers, under the leadership of Alexiev and Kornilov, and, after Kornilov's death, of Denikin, who lived a hunted life down in the far-distant Kuban country, at the eastern end of the Black Sea. This band was in no condition to conduct any offensive, as its leaders well knew. Their sole ambition was for the moment to keep their company in being so that later, when hunger brought the inevitable reaction against the Bolsheviks, it might exist as the rallying-point to which the discontented could repair.

But for the moment the great obstacle to the unity of the country under Bolshevik rule was German policy. Owing to the Allied blockade the food situation in Germany and Austria-Hungary was very serious; and therefore, naturally enough, the Central Powers were determined that one of the consequences of peace with helpless Russia should be that they should obtain for themselves the vast harvests of south Russia. As food in north Russia was even shorter than it was in Germany and Austria, they saw that they were only likely to obtain the country's corn if they effectively occupied it. Therefore the Germans from the first insisted on treating the Ukraine as an independent country, and on recognizing the Rada as its government, even at a time when, as Trotsky said with bitter wit, its territory was "restricted to the rooms which are assigned to their deputations in Brest-Litovsk."<sup>35</sup>

It was this territorial question which nearly wrecked the

<sup>35</sup> Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, vol. I, p. 399.

peace negotiations and the whole Bolshevik experiment. After the signing of the six months' armistice the definite peace negotiations were opened at Brest-Litovsk on 9-22 December. Joffe, the head of the Soviet delegation, soon to be succeeded by Trotsky, submitted the general proposals that all negotiations be open and that the peace-terms be drawn up on a basis of no annexations, no indemnities and self-determination. To these proposals Kuhlmann, the German Foreign Secretary, returned a vague but surprisingly sympathetic answer.

So far as the issue lay between Russia and Germany, the brutal truth was, as General Hoffmann, the German military representative, said and as Lenin fully understood, that "the Bolsheviks must accept the conditions of the Central Powers, however harsh they be."<sup>30</sup> Yet Kuhlmann had his eyes elsewhere than on Petrograd. He thought that, if he accepted the Wilsonian formulae, there was just a chance that America and the Allies would join in the peace negotiations. He knew the military situation, that Germany had to stake everything on one last desperate throw that spring and that success was doubtful. German diplomats might soon have to sit down at conference with their enemies in order to salvage what they could. Their task would be immeasurably easier if they could pretend that they had been obedient to the Wilsonian formulae in the hour of their victory. Therefore Kuhlmann was most anxious that the Peace of Brest-Litovsk should have the appearance of a peace of principle and by negotiation. On the other hand the Western war was not yet lost and Germany must take the opportunity of obtaining the food-supplies which were necessary for the continuance of war. It was diplomacy's task to make it appear that such advantages fell naturally to the Germans from the application of Wilsonian principles and, if possible, to win the full consent of the Bolsheviks to the German solution. The Bolshevik

<sup>30</sup> *Die Aufzeichnungen des Generalmajors Max Hoffman*, vol. II, pp. 201, 202.

policy on the other hand was to use the negotiations as an opportunity for propaganda for their principles, hoping thus to bring nearer the communist revolutions which they were looking for in the western countries.

Yet neither the Germans nor the Bolsheviks were such simpletons as not very clearly to understand how each was trying to use the other. And in such an atmosphere it was not surprising that all pretence of cordiality should soon evaporate. The German invited the Russians to an evening reception, and Trotsky was embarrassed to know whether proletarian principles would permit him to don evening clothes or not. "Go in a petticoat if you can only get us peace," wired Lenin. And Trotsky went. But soon afterwards he forbade the Bolshevik delegation all social relations with the Germans.

At first Trotsky had raised no objection to the acceptance of the officials of the Rada as the Government of Ukraina, and the first quarrels arose concerning the application of the principles of self-determination to the Baltic provinces. Trotsky claimed for those people the right to express their preferences in free plebiscite; Kuhlmann on the other hand argued from some resolutions of patently hand-picked assemblies of landlords that they had already declared for secession from Russia and that the Bolsheviks had therefore no business to concern themselves any further with their fate. Hoffmann answered an attempt of Trotsky to appeal against the ethics of force with a brusque but just *tu quoque*. "The Soviet Government is based exclusively on force and anyone who thinks otherwise is simply declared a counter-revolutionary and a bourgeois and outlawed."<sup>27</sup> On 3-18 January General Hoffmann presented his ultimatum to the Bolsheviks. The fate of all territory south of Brest-Litovsk was declared dependent upon negotiations between the Central Powers and the Ukrainian Rada. North of Brest-Litovsk the Russians were to cede territory

<sup>27</sup> *Die Aufzeichnungen des Generalmajors Max Hoffman*, vol. II, pp. 201, 202.

roughly corresponding to the present frontiers of Poland, Lithuania and Latvia.

The terms were severe, and, though the Bolsheviks may have lacked the national pride which would mourn for the dismemberment of an ancient empire, there was the highly practical question how the North Russians could escape starvation if the Germans were allowed to seize all the corn of the south. A group under Bukharin was for rejecting the terms and declaring war, but the realists, Lenin, Stalin and Trotsky, saw clearly the folly of such desperate policy. All that would happen would be that the troops would refuse to march and the Bolshevik regime would fall. Bukharin argued that the German army, if it attempted to advance into Russia, would dissolve in mutiny, as had the armies of Kornilov and Krasnov. But Lenin was under no such illusion. He knew well the difference between German and Russian morale and, though he thought that a German revolution was near at hand, even he did not think it immediate. "Germany is still only pregnant with revolution," he said.<sup>88</sup> Stalin, already showing himself less susceptible to wishful thinking than his colleagues, said bluntly, "There is no revolutionary movement in the West."

As he had done in the old days of Bolshevik-Menshevik controversy, Trotsky held a lone position between the two groups. He agreed with Lenin and Stalin as against Bukharin that to recommence war was madness. You cannot fight a war without an army, and the army had already run away, or, as he put it in a happy phrase, it was "self-demobilized." On the other hand, why accept the German terms? Why not declare the war at an end but at the same time refuse to sign the peace, thus casting the whole odium for it on to the Germans? Trotsky's proposal was approved by the Central Committee, in spite of Lenin's opposition by nine votes to seven.

<sup>88</sup> *Protocols of the Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Party*, pp. 199-207.

The Germans, however, had, as Lenin prophesied, no mind to be made fools of in such a way. The only effect of Trotsky's policy was to convince Kuhlmann of the hopelessness of a peace by negotiation and to win his consent to a dictated peace. On 8-21 February the Bolshevik troops entered Kiev. In spite of that the Germans signed peace with the fugitive Rada on 9-22 February, and at once German and Austrian troops began to move towards Kiev to restore its power. On the 10-23 Trotsky in a flamboyant speech refused to sign the peace. "We no longer desire to take part in this purely imperialistic war, where the pretensions of the propertied classes are clearly paid for with human blood. We are equally uncompromising in regard to the imperialism of both camps. . . . In anticipation of that hour, which we hope is near, when the oppressed working classes of all countries will take power into their own hands, like the working people of Russia, we withdraw our army and our people from the war."<sup>30</sup>

The Germans took this as a denunciation of the armistice and after the requisite week had elapsed ordered their troops to march in on the northern front as well. As the Germans advanced, there was a critical meeting of the Bolshevik party Central Committee. Once more, as in the old days, Lenin and Trotsky were opposed to each other. Lenin argued that Trotsky's bluff had been called, that there was nothing for it but to accept the German terms, that the alternative would be the overthrow of the regime. Trotsky was for continuing passive resistance for a few days more in the hope of disturbances in the German army. In a vote in the morning Trotsky defeated Lenin by seven votes to six, but in the evening news came in that the Germans had already occupied Dvinsk, and in a panic the Committee reversed its decision.

A radio message was sent to Berlin, asking for terms of peace. The reply was to repeat the terms of the previous

<sup>30</sup> Trotsky, *Collected Works*, 17, Part I, pp. 103-4.

treaty but to demand in addition Esthonia and Finland. In the south the Bolsheviks were to recognize the Rada and to withdraw all troops from the Ukraine. They had also to cede some Caucasian districts to the Turks. The treaty was to be accepted within three days and ratified within a fortnight.

Trotsky had suggested an appeal for help to the Allies and Lenin had agreed with him in the happy phrase, "I ask to add my vote in favour of taking potatoes and arms from the bandits of Anglo-French imperialism."<sup>40</sup> But what were the "bandits" to gain out of supplying them? It was by now sufficiently evident that, whatever the regime, no Russian troops were going to play any further effective part in the war. Whatever fighting was to be done in Russia would have to be done by Allied troops, and in the early months of 1918, as they stood and waited for the great offensive in the West, the Allies had no such troops to spare. On the other hand the Bolsheviks had repudiated their debts to the Allies and were openly preaching revolution throughout their empires. Why should the Allies send them either potatoes or arms to save them from destruction?

<sup>40</sup> *Protocols of the Central Committee*, p. 246.

## CHAPTER X

### POWER

AS soon as it was evident that the Germans meant business and the Allies did not, Lenin forced the hands of his colleagues by threatening to resign, if the peace was rejected. Lomov was for accepting the resignation, and Bukharin in the *Communist* denounced Lenin as "a phrasemonger of opportunism," comparing him, of all that was offensive, with Kautsky.<sup>1</sup> But the majority was not willing to break with Lenin. Before his threat the peace was accepted on 3 March though the social revolutionaries left the Government rather than agree to it. The Soviet Congress took its revenge by issuing a message "expressing to all the peoples which are perishing and suffering from the horrors of imperialist war its sympathy and its firm conviction that the happy time is not far away when the working masses of all bourgeois countries will overthrow the yoke of capital and establish the socialist order, which alone can assure a stable and just peace."<sup>2</sup>

Lenin signed the treaty, but he felt no obligation to obey it further than he was compelled. He had promised to supply no arms to communist rebels against the Rada or the bourgeois Finnish Government, but he steadily did so, knowing that the Germans would be reluctant to bring back their troops from the western front to punish him. "Yes, of course, we break the treaty," he shouted to his hecklers.<sup>3</sup> "We have already broken it thirty or forty

<sup>1</sup> Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, vol. I, pp. 389-408.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Yuri K. Khuchinkov and Andrei Sabarin, "Recent International Policy," in *Treaties, Notes and Declarations*, vol. II, p. 135.

<sup>3</sup> *Seventh Congress of the Russian Soviet Party*, p. 29.



tinies." Yet such breaches were to little purpose. By the Treaty the Bolsheviks had no longer any rights in the Ukraine, and the Germans and Austrians were able without difficulty to occupy the country. They had already restored the Rada to Kiev the day before the signing of the Treaty. Soon, not finding the Rada to their liking, they deposed it in favour of a creature of theirs, called Skoropadsky, and, pushing forward into the Cossack country, occupied Rostov in the beginning of May and established General Krasnov, the leader of November's abortive march on Petrograd as hetman of the Cossacks. The Rumanians took advantage of the confusion to march into, and occupy, Bessarabia, and in the north German assistance was able to bring victory to the Whites in the evenly matched civil war in Finland.

It is customary to condemn in sweeping terms the barbarity of Brest-Litovsk. It is doubtful whether such language is justified. Whatever the German motive, the fact remains that, of the territory then detached from Russia, the greater part—Finland, the Baltic countries, Poland—has prospered in its freedom. It would have been injustice to have left these lands under the oriental tyranny of the Soviet. The Ukraine, it is true, has returned to Moscow, and there was little serious pretence that Skoropadsky's was a genuinely national government. The law that drove the Germans thither was that of necessity, and they can hardly be blamed, if, in face of the Allied blockade, they took their food where and as they could. It is true that they so reduced the Russian frontiers, that, had the system of Brest-Litovsk not itself collapsed, it is doubtful whether the Bolshevik regime could have survived. But would the world have been the loser by its collapse? Or, in any event, can the masters of the German Imperial system be blamed that they were not careful to provide for the survival of that which from the first had publicly announced itself their implacable and scornful foe?

Lenin at any rate did not bother to waste time in serious argument that the German conduct was "unjust." The phrase to his mind was without meaning. There was no justice between the champions of one class and those of another. Between them was war, a war in which quarter was neither given nor expected. The "capitalist" German Government would of course have destroyed the "proletarian" Russian Government, if it could. It was the Bolshevik good fortune that other preoccupations prevented it, and the Bolsheviks must take advantage of this fortunate breathing-space before capitalism massed for its attack.

The prime problem was that of preserving the people from starvation. It was a problem by no means easy of solution with the Germans in occupation of the Ukraine. How could the peasants be persuaded to part with a portion of their none too abundant corn? They could not be given manufactured goods in exchange, because there were none. Chaos and general strikes had reduced industrial productivity almost to vanishing point. It was necessary to get the wheels of industry moving again, and, in order to obtain immediate results, Lenin was perfectly willing to postpone communist experiments in industrial organization. Principle must, if necessary, be sacrificed for immediate results. Bourgeois specialists must be hired at large salaries, where no communist was competent for the task. Above all the workers must be fed. "Petrograd is in an unprecedentedly catastrophic condition," he wrote with frankness.<sup>4</sup> "There is no bread. The population is given the remaining potato flour and crusts. The Red capital is on the verge of perishing from famine. Counter-revolution is raising its head, directing the dissatisfaction of the hungry masses against the Soviet Government."

It was a matter of life and death and Lenin faced it with characteristic honesty and characteristic brutality. Food could only be obtained from those who possessed it—

<sup>4</sup> *Seventh Congress of the Russian Soviet Party*, 11 May 1918.

from the peasants who had laid by a reserve. It could only be obtained by force since there was no equivalent to offer. Yet he could not afford to quarrel with the peasants. So the only policy was to use the language of class-war in order to divide the provident from the improvident and to use the latter to attack the former. "While the consuming provinces are starving," ran the Soviet decree, "there are now, as formerly, large reserves of grain which has not even been milled, from the harvests of 1916 and 1917, in the producing provinces. The grain is in the hands of the kulaks and the rich, in the hands of the village bourgeoisie. . . . There must be an end of this stubbornness of the greedy kulaks and rich. . . . Violence against the bourgeoisie." Let "all the working and unpropertied peasants unite immediately for a merciless war against the kulaks. . . . Apply armed force in the event that resistance is shown to the taking away of grain or other food products."<sup>5</sup>

He formed Committees of the Poor, where the peasants who had no reserves went round seizing the reserves of the provident, their reward being that they might keep a proportion of that which they took. As may well be imagined, this desperate battle of the starving dogs for the last bone let loose burning, beating and murder over the whole land. The archives of the Commissariat for Internal Affairs record 108 peasant risings during that bloody summer.

To have attained power in 1917 was under the circumstances no enormous feat. To a large extent the Bolsheviks had their greatness thrust upon them by the blunders of others. To keep power throughout 1918 was one of the great feats of history. It was indeed a desperate year for them. The agrarian risings were in themselves sufficiently serious. At first they did not seem to offer a direct political threat to the regime. The policy of requisitions indeed showed the peasants that they had been precipitate

<sup>5</sup> *Izvestia*, 14 May 1918.

in their welcome to the Bolsheviks, but they had no wish to see the landlords back again, and therefore felt no temptation to rally to Denikin's army of volunteer ex-officers, whose political programme was merely one of restoration of the old order. They resisted the Bolshevik requisitions violently but sporadically and without plan. Then towards the end of May, there occurred near Chelyabinsk in the Urals a clash between the Bolsheviks and the Czechoslovak prisoners of war who were making their way to Vladivostok, thence to go round the world to France and the Western front. The Czechoslovaks had up till then had no intention of fighting in a Russian civil war and had indeed co-operated with the Bolsheviks in opposition to the German invasion of Ukrainia. But very sensibly they objected to being asked to travel unarmed across Russia in its anarchical condition. Trotsky most foolishly insisted on their disarmament, gave orders that any armed Czechoslovak should be shot and refused them railway facilities. They were thus forced to fight against the Bolsheviks, whether they wished to or not, and since, though few, they were disciplined, they won startling victories over unorganized enemies. At the same time the Allies, though they were unable to spare European troops from the Western front, had no objection to the Japanese, who were already in occupation of Vladivostok, advancing into Siberia. By the end of May all Siberia and many towns in Eastern European Russia had passed out of Bolshevik hands, and anti-Bolshevik Russian governments, supported by foreign bayonets, had been established in them. In Siberia there had never been a landlord problem, and therefore those who were opposed to the Bolsheviks were more or less frankly reactionary. Such was the complexion of the Siberian Government that was established at Omsk. In European Russia the situation was different. The Czechoslovaks were invited by anti-

Bolsheviks to advance on and occupy Samara which they did, and the Government that was established there was a social revolutionary government, which claimed to represent the majority of the Constituent Assembly and which promised the land to the peasants both as against the return of the landlord and as against Government requisitions. M. Maisky, the present Russian Ambassador in London, was a member of it. Of all the governments established during these years in Russia that of Samara certainly most nearly offered the people what they wanted, and it is surprising that it did not arouse more enthusiasm among the peasantry. The peasants were willing to fight stubbornly against landlord or commissar, but, whether through wise disillusionment or narrowness of vision, they were no longer willing to fight for any roseate promises. Bitter experience had taught them to pay attention only to the performances and not at all to the promises of politicians.

It is noteworthy that the only leader during these years who at all aroused the enthusiasm of the peasants was the half-mad Ukrainian, Makhno, who promised nothing save what he was most ready to perform—to murder impartially all officers of any government—and who, to show his contempt for all government, issued paper-money with a superscription that there would be no penalty at all for forging it. To him volunteers flocked and were willing to take the extraordinary oath “to obey the orders of the commanders, if the commanders are sober when they give them”<sup>6</sup>—a compliment that they paid to no other captain.

Meanwhile the situation in the towns nominally under Bolshevik rule was hardly better than that in the country districts. The spirit of turbulence, which the Bolsheviks had aroused against other masters, was now turned against them. There was hardly a town which had not its tale of strikes and riots. After the signing of Brest-Litovsk, Lenin transferred the capital back to Moscow. He established

<sup>6</sup> M. Kubanin, *The Makhno Movement*, p. 184.

himself there in the Kremlin, but there was no touch of oriental luxury in the life of this oriental despot. His trousers were still the old trousers of Zurich days, and his rooms in the Palace of the Emperors were as sparsely furnished as had been his Zurich lodgings. A visitor records how he found him at supper with his wife and sister. Tea, black bread, butter and cheese was the menu, and, when the table was cleared, "his sister was asked to look and see if there were any sort of sweet to offer, and she managed to unearth a little glass jar of preserved fruit."<sup>7</sup>

The Soviet Congress in Moscow at the beginning of July showed the social revolutionaries, who still commanded the majority in the country, in bitter hostility to the Government, denouncing the policy of requisitions and the peace with Germany. Mr. Bruce Lockhart, then in Moscow as British agent, was present at that conference and has left a memorable account of it in his *Memoirs of a British Agent*. Maria Spiridanova, the half-demented leader of the social revolutionaries and an assassin of the Tsarist official, Lijnovsky, delivered a wild and hysterical attack on Lenin. "I accuse you," she screamed, pointing at him, "of betraying the peasants, of making use of them for your own ends and of not serving their interests." "In Lenin's philosophy," she shouted, turning to the peasants behind her, "you are only dung—only manure. Our other differences are only temporary, but on the peasant question we are prepared to give battle. When the peasants, the Bolshevik peasants, the Left social revolutionary peasants and the non-party peasants are alike humiliated, oppressed and crushed, crushed as peasants, in my hand you will still find the same pistol, the same bomb which once forced me to defend—" Pandemonium broke out. Sverdlov, the President, rang his bell in vain for order. Trotsky jumped to his feet and tried to speak. A savage yell as of wild beasts drove him back to his seat.

<sup>7</sup> Marcu, *Lenin*, p. 344.

Then Lenin rose. He went across to Sverdlov, patted him on the shoulder and whispered some words to him. Then he turned to the yelling audience and stood there, holding the lapels of his coat and quietly laughing at them. After a minute or two, when lungs began to tire, he quietly raised his hand and silence fell. Calmly and prosaically he explained to them his policy, its necessity, the inevitability of the coming world revolution—as always in his prophecies of the future, persuasive, unanswerable and, as the event has proved, entirely wrong. They listened in silence and volleys of applause greeted him when he sat down. But even his victory had been but fleeting. Kamkov, another social revolutionary, leapt to his feet, rushed over to the box where Mirbach, the German Ambassador, was sitting, and shouted, “The dictatorship of the proletariat has developed into a dictatorship of Mirbach. In spite of all our warnings the policy of Lenin remains the same, and we are become, not an independent power but the lackeys of the German imperialists, who have the audacity to show their faces even in this theatre.” The social revolutionaries, all their excitement re-aroused, jumped to their feet. Screaming and shaking their fists, they shouted, “Down with Mirbach. Away with the German butchers! Away with the hang-man’s noose from Brest.”<sup>8</sup>

The social revolutionaries boasted that they would force the Government into war with Germany, whether it wanted it or not; and they showed that they were no idle boasters when the next day two of their members obtained an entry into the German Embassy and there shot Mirbach dead. “This is the obvious work of monarchists, or those provocators who want to drag Russia into a war in the interests of Anglo-French capitalists who have also bribed the Czechoslovaks. Mobilize all forces,” telegraphed Lenin.<sup>9</sup>

Three weeks later another social revolutionary killed

<sup>8</sup> Bruce Lockhart, *Memoirs of a British Agent*, p. 206.

<sup>9</sup> Letter 205

General Eichorn, the German military commander in Kiev, with a bomb.

On 6 July, the day of Count Mirbach's assassination, two independent anti-Bolshevik revolutions broke out. The one under Savinkov, Kerensky's Governor of Petrograd, financed apparently by French money, seized Yaroslav on the Upper Volga and the Moscow-Archangel railway. The other was in Moscow itself, and Muraviev, commander of the Red troops that were in the field against the Samara Government, declared for it. The revolts were, it is true, put down. Yaroslav was ruthlessly bombarded and recaptured, and the Allied occupation of Archangel, on which Savinkov was relying, came ten days too late. (Though there were later to be loud complaints of Allied intervention, it is a curiosity that the Allies first went to Archangel at the invitation of the Bolsheviks in order to protect Russian war material there from seizure by the Germans in Finland.) Muraviev's troops refused to follow him in treason and he was either killed or committed suicide. But, when the Samara Government took advantage of the confusion to capture Kazan, only Nijni-Novgorod remained between them and Moscow. In the south the Bolsheviks were expelled from Baku and a British force under General Dunsterville occupied it in order to keep the oil-fields out of Turkish hands. It was invited in by the non-Bolshevik members of the Baku Soviet, who did not wish for the rule either of Turk or of Bolshevik.

Thus, as August drew to a close, the outlook for the Bolsheviks looked black indeed. It might be, as Lenin claimed in a message, that "for every hundred of our mistakes . . . there are 10,000 great and heroic acts."<sup>10</sup> It might be that there was but little agreement among their enemies on what they would put in the place of Bolshevism. But at least there was, it seemed, agreement in their desire to be rid of the Bolsheviks. Whoever might die with them, the Bolsheviks, it seemed, were doomed.

<sup>10</sup> *Collected Works*, pp. 15, 412.



Then on the morning of 30 August a social revolutionary shot dead Uritzky, the head of the Petrograd Cheka. That same evening in Moscow Lenin went to address a meeting of workers in the Michelson factory. When he came out and was standing by his car, two women came up to him apparently to ask for redress of some grievance. He bent to listen, and there rang out three shots of which two found a mark, one in the chest, the other in the left shoulder.

For a few days Lenin lay in a critical condition. "Lenin's forehead and face were a waxy yellow," wrote Bronch-Bruevich.<sup>11</sup> "His eyes flickered open and the first words he said were 'Why should they have made me suffer so? It would have been much better if they had finished me off.' But it soon became evident that the wound was not to prove fatal. After a week he was able to attend to business again and after three weeks he was fully back at work." This second attempt on Lenin's life led the Bolshevik leaders to a terrible and momentous decision. From the first the Bolshevik Government had not been notably reluctant to shed blood. The month of July had seen the murder of the Romanovs at Ekaterinburg—a murder to which the Central Executive Committee had in all probability given their consent and which they at any rate accepted with cold-blooded indifference. When the news of it came in, a meeting of the Council of People's Commissars was discussing some proposals about public health. Sverdlov got up and said, "Nicholas was shot in Ekaterinburg according to a decision of the Territorial Soviet. Nicholas wanted to flee. The Czechs were approaching. The presidium of the All-Russian Executive Committee decided to approve." No one had any comment to make, and Lenin dryly suggested that the Council should return to the consideration of the business in hand.<sup>12</sup> The policy of requisitions had also brought death to many others, less unhappily eminent.

<sup>11</sup> Wheatley, *Red Eagle*, p. 189.

<sup>12</sup> V. Miliutin, *Papers from a Diary*, published in *Prozhektor*, No. 4.

Yet there were stories of mercy as well as of violence. It was possible to argue that revolution is always a bloody business and that Russians are always a bloody people and that it was hardly then to be expected that a Russian revolution would pass off without much blood. Much of the violence was spontaneous and inevitable. It was this second attempt on Lenin's life which persuaded the Bolsheviks to resort to terror as a deliberate policy. On 3 September it was officially announced that 500 people, whom it was not even pretended had been in any way connected with Uritzky's murder, had been shot in Petrograd as a reprisal for it. On 4 September Petrovsky, the Commissar for Internal Affairs, issued the following proclamation:<sup>18</sup>

*"The murder of Volodarsky, the murder of Uritzky, the attempted murder and wounding of the President of the People's Commissars, V. I. Lenin, the mass shooting of tens of thousands of our comrades in Finland, Ukrainia and finally in the Don and in Czechoslovakia, the continually exposed plots in the rear of our armies, the open participation of Right social revolutionaries and other counter-revolutionary scoundrels in these plots and at the same time the extraordinarily negligible numbers of serious repressions and mass shootings of White Guards and bourgeoisie by the Soviets show that, notwithstanding continual talk about mass terror against socialist revolutionaries, White Guards and bourgeoisie, this terror really does not exist.*

*"There must be a decisive end of this situation. There must be an end of laxity and weakness. All Right socialist revolutionaries known to local soviets must be immediately arrested. A considerable number of hostages must be taken from among the bourgeoisie and the officers. Mass shooting must be applied upon the least attempts at resistance or the least movement in the midst of the White Guards. Local Provincial Executive Committees must show special initiative in this respect.*

<sup>18</sup> *Izvestia*, 4 September 1918.

"Administrative departments through the militia and the Extraordinary Commissions must take all measures to detect and arrest all who hide under foreign names and surnames, with unconditional shooting of all who are involved in White Guard activity.

"All the above mentioned measures must be carried out immediately.

"The Commissariat for Internal Affairs must be immediately informed of any indecisive activities of local soviets in this direction.

"Last of all, the rear of our armies must be finally cleared of all White Guardism and all scoundrelly conspirators against the power of the working class and the poorest peasants. Not the least wavering, not the least indecision in the application of mass terror."

On 8 September, Lenin, recovering, telegraphed to the Fifth Army headquarters.<sup>14</sup> "Convinced that quelling of Kazan Czechs and White Guards and their bloodthirsty Kulak supporters will be a model of mercilessness."

The *Bulletin* of the Cheka with its steady record of officially admitted executions in the different cities of Russia, the bold avowal of the use of torture bear ample evidence to the fidelity with which these instructions were obeyed. But it is beyond the task of such a book as this to enter into the repugnant but important inquiry, how many were the tens of thousands who were thus done to death. Our concern is with Lenin's attitude towards terror, and that is shown by his message to the American workers, issued at this time. "The bourgeoisie of international imperialism killed ten million and mutilated twenty million human beings in its war," he wrote,<sup>15</sup> "a war to decide whether British or German robbers should rule the whole world. If our war, the war of the oppressed and exploited against the oppressors and exploiters, will cost half a million or a million victims in all countries, the bourgeoisie will say that the former

<sup>14</sup> Letter 300.

<sup>15</sup> *Collected Works*, vol. XV, pp. 420-2.

sacrifices were justified, the latter criminal. The proletariat will say something quite different." And, if they do not say so, they must be made to. "If there are waverings among the socialists who came over to you yesterday," he wrote to the Hungarian communists,<sup>16</sup> "or among the petty bourgeoisie, in regard to the dictatorship of the proletariat, suppress the waverings mercilessly. Shooting is the proper fate of a coward in war." "Is it only my imagination," Gorky once asked him, "or do you really feel pity for people?" "For the intelligent ones I am sorry," said Lenin.<sup>17</sup>

Such was Lenin, and yet such was not the whole of Lenin. There was always the other side of him, the domestic, bourgeois side. In the months of crisis and of terror he was still writing a pleasant, chatty letter to his wife about Gorky's "caprices," a letter of noble consolation to a comrade whose son had been killed in the war and—strangest of all—at the very height of terror, tyranny and power a letter to a librarian, confessing that he knows that it is against the rules to take out works of reference, but might he have a Greek dictionary and certain other books for a single night? "I would return them by morning."<sup>18</sup>

Terror is generally successful when it is sufficiently bloody. It is only the half-hearted terror that fails, and the Bolshevik terror was no exception. It turned the tide. Trotsky, now War Commissar, applied methods of terror not merely to the revolution's enemies but also to its troops. Even his own Bolshevik colleagues laid a protest against his "extremely light-hearted attitude towards such things as shooting." Throughout these months this restless, relentless, repugnant genius was rushing to and fro across Russia, organizing, exhorting, shooting, throwing off in the darkest hours fantastic and glowing prophecies that all Europe would go communist and that then the workers of Europe would throw themselves on the last great robber nation of the

<sup>16</sup> *Collected Works*, vol. XVI, p. 229. <sup>17</sup> *Marcu, Lenin*, p. 357. <sup>18</sup> Letter 320.

world, the United States of America. After us the millennium. Out of it all emerged the Red Army, the great creation of Trotsky's genius. The Whites, it is true, answered to the best of their ability atrocity with atrocity, but their ability was limited. Both Whites and Reds were hated by the peasantry, both were bloody, but the Reds won because they were the bloodier.

The Czechoslovaks, who had little interest in internal Russian politics and were all but as unsympathetic towards Siberian reaction as towards Russian Bolshevism, saw no reason why they should stay to meet Trotsky's fury, and with their withdrawal the tide turned. The Red Army, which was not yet fit to fight foreigners, was the superior of Russian White Armies. The anti-Bolshevik cause was weakened by the lack of cordiality between the Tomsk and the Samara Governments, who held widely differing conceptions of the State. In September in a conference at Ufa they agreed to submit themselves to a joint directory, but their agreement came too late. In September Kazan fell before the Bolsheviks and Samara in October.

Superficially the falshood of the trite maxims about the ineffectiveness of force is self-evident. There is a deeper sense, however, in which they contain much truth. The weapons of terror are by no means always vanquished. They often conquer, but they conquer those who use them as well as those who suffer them. Man cannot use such weapons without perverting his own cause. The victors suffer morally, while the vanquished suffer physically. Lenin's dream was of the classless state, but out of Lenin's revolution there has emerged a society in which his own followers are busy recreating the barriers of class. They that drew the sword are perishing by the sword, and, if his meaner followers have proved unworthy of his dream, one of the reasons may be that it was he himself who so brutalized them that they became incapable of any dreaming. Even as early as 1920 a writer, then as little unsympa-

thetic to the Russian cause as Bertrand Russell, noted in the communists the marks of a new, emergent aristocratic class.

However much subsequent policy may have striven to conceal the truth, there is no question about it that the survival of the Bolshevik regime in 1918 was mainly due to Trotsky. Lenin contributed to it by his lavish promise which he gave to the Cossacks that the Bolsheviks would respect their special customs and rights—a promise which he was careful to break when danger was passed, but he was mainly occupied in the organization of “war communism”—which proved a complete fiasco, whether owing to the inherent defects of communism or to the impossible conditions created by the hostile occupation of agricultural land and the sources of raw materials must necessarily be a matter of opinion. But Lenin’s eyes were looking beyond Trotsky’s war. He asked of Trotsky only that he save the regime from premature debacle, for in these summer months both his eyes and those of Trotsky were turned elsewhere and to bigger game. The Central Powers were patently collapsing and both Trotsky and Lenin were confident that their collapse would mean not merely the end of the German regime in Ukrainia but the establishment of communism in Germany and throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

As early as the beginning of October Lenin was writing to the Soviet Central Executive Committee, bidding it be prepared to assist the German workers in their struggle “with their own and British imperialism.” “World history during the last days,” he said,<sup>19</sup> “has remarkably hastened its course towards the world workers’ revolution.” Trotsky enthusiastically predicted “a mighty block of Russia and Germany, with 200,000,000 inhabitants, on which all the waves of imperialism will break.”<sup>20</sup> “Free Latvia,”

<sup>19</sup> *Collected Works*, vol. XVI, pp. 420-2.

<sup>20</sup> Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed Itself*, vol. I, p. 372.

he said,<sup>21</sup> "free Poland, and Lithuania, free Finland, on the other side free Ukraina, will not be a wedge but a uniting link between Soviet Russia and the future Soviet Germany and Austria-Hungary. This is the beginning of a European communist federation—a union of the proletarian republics of Europe." "The movement advances at such a dizzy speed," said Zinoviev in 1919<sup>22</sup>, "that it may be said with confidence, Within a year we will already begin to forget that there was a struggle for communism in Europe, because within a year all Europe will be communist." "Let the bourgeoisie rage," ran Lenin's message to the Berne Conference,<sup>23</sup> "let them still kill thousands of workers. The victory will be ours. The victory of the world communist revolution is assured." "We will all die," he wrote, "to help the German workers in the cause of the movement forward of the revolution beginning in Germany. . . . Ten times bigger registration for the army. An army of three millions must be ready in the *spring* for helping the international workers' revolution."

The governments of Germany in her hour of defeat were a great deal more hostile towards Russia than had been those of previous months. For, whereas Germany in arms thought to use Russia, defeated Germany was afraid of her. The Bolsheviks had promised at Brest-Litovsk to abstain from all communist propaganda in Germany, but of course did not consider themselves bound by their promise. Reed, the American communist, boasted that by September 1918, the Bolsheviks had on their pay-roll sixty-eight agents in Austria-Hungary and more in Germany—others, too, in France, Switzerland and Italy.<sup>24</sup> Radek was the head of the foreign revolutionary department. Joffe, the Russia Ambassador in Berlin, boasted<sup>25</sup> that "in the preparation

<sup>21</sup> Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed Itself*, vol. I, p. 394.

<sup>22</sup> *Twenty-Five Years of the Russian Communist Party*, p. 286.

<sup>23</sup> Fox, *Lenin*, p. 308.

<sup>24</sup> *Five Years of the Communist International*, p. 179.

<sup>25</sup> Louis Fischer, *The Soviet in World Affairs*.

of the German revolution the Russian Embassy worked all the time in close contact with the German socialists." In consequence on 5 November Prince Max of Baden, the last chancellor of Kaiser Wilhelm, broke off relations with the Russians.

When at last German resistance collapsed, Lenin assumed with premature jubilation that this was the real German revolution. He telegraphed to his agent, Vorovsky, in Stockholm, on 10 November.<sup>26</sup>

"To-day news has been received from Germany of the triumph of the revolution in Germany. At first Kiel informed us by radio that the power had passed into the hands of workers and sailors; next Berlin sent us the following, 'Greetings, freedom and peace for all. Berlin and surroundings in the hands of the Soviet of Workers and Soldier Deputies.' . . .

"German soldiers have arrested at the front a peace delegation of the old German Government and have begun peace negotiations with French soldiers."

And again:<sup>27</sup>

"According to latest information German soldiers have arrested delegations of German generals who had gone to negotiate an armistice. German soldiers have entered into direct negotiations with French soldiers. Kaiser Wilhelm has abdicated. Chancellor Prince Baden has resigned. New Chancellor will be Government Social-Democrat Ebert. There is a general strike in all large towns of Southern Germany. Entire German fleet is on the side of the revolution. All German ports of North and Baltic Seas are in hands of German revolutionary fleet. We received a radio telegram from the Kiel Soviet of Soldier Deputies addressed to the International Proletariat saying that the Red Flag is flying over the German fleet and that the funeral of those who fell fighting for freedom will take place to-day."

<sup>26</sup> Letter 304.

<sup>27</sup> Letter 305.



When later it became evident that the Government established in Germany was a very moderate Government, by no means friendly to Russia, and when the Spartacist rising in January was put down without much difficulty, Lenin's disappointment was intense. He was bitter in his denunciation of what he called the "opportunists"—the moderate non-revolutionary socialists who now, as during the war, were treacherously working for peace. He never understood that in Germany, unlike Russia, the peasantry was not revolutionary, and communism's achievement in that country has been little save that of making parliamentary government unworkable.

Both Lenin and Trotsky saw in the defeat of Germany a great new opportunity; but they saw also a great new danger. As Lenin put it in a speech which he delivered on 22 October,<sup>28</sup> "First, we were never so near to international proletarian revolution as we are now. Second, we were never in a more dangerous position than at the present time." The danger was that the English and French, freed from the German preoccupation, would turn their attack on to the Bolsheviks. "We must take advantage of the short interval before the Allied attack," he argued. "We must slip in between departing German militarism and approaching Anglo-French militarism," said Trotsky.<sup>29</sup> "We must occupy the Don, the North Caucasus and the Caspian, support the workers and peasants of Ukraina, crush their enemies and enter into our Soviet house, in which we include the North Caucasus, the Don and Ukraina, go into our Soviet dwelling and say that there is no entrance there for British or for German scoundrels." In this policy the Bolsheviks were successful. With the hope of preventing such a "slipping-in" the Allies in the armistice terms had stipulated that the German troops should remain in the Ukraine until the Allies recalled them. But the Germans

<sup>28</sup> *Collected Works*, vol. XV, p. 430.

<sup>29</sup> Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed Itself*, vol. I, p. 372.

had no heart for fighting in such a cause, and with German defeat the German regimes in the Ukraine and the Don country easily collapsed, and the Bolsheviks were able to occupy the territory. In South Russia only Denikin, in the Kuban country, who had never been dependent on German support, remained in arms against the Bolsheviks. On the other hand the attempt to reoccupy the land surrendered along the Baltic coast succeeded for a short time only in Latvia, and elsewhere met with defeat.

Yet Lenin had most frankly declared war on capitalist society, and he had no doubt that Great Britain and France would hit back at him now that their opportunity had come. "Now world capital will start an offensive against us," he said to Chicherin.<sup>30</sup> And both the West's instinct of self-preservation and more frankly predatory motives combined to favour intervention. "In the Caucasus," explained the chairman of the Bibi-Eibat Oil Company to a board meeting in December 1918, "... British forces ... have been welcomed by nearly every race and creed, who look to us to free them. ... Never before in the history of these islands was there such an opportunity for the peaceful penetration of British influence and British trade. ... The oil industry of Russia, liberally financed and properly organized under British auspices, in itself, will be a valuable asset to the Empire."<sup>31</sup>

Yet the obstinate fact, obstinate alike to intervention for idealistic and for material motives, was that the British or French soldier, who was thanking his stars that he had brought back a whole skin from Flanders or Verdun, was not prepared to risk it in battle for uncouth Russian cities whose names he could not pronounce and of whose existence he had never previously heard. Allied intervention in 1919 was therefore of necessity practically confined to support in materials, which were liberally sent to Kolchak, Denikin,

<sup>30</sup> Fischer, *The Soviet in World Affairs*, vol. I, p. 150.

<sup>31</sup> Ross, *Russian Soviet Republic*, pp. 235, 236.

Yudenitch and the other generals. It was ineffective, in the sense that all the generals whom the Allies supported went down to defeat. On the other hand Lenin's confident plans for general European revolution ended in fiasco. "This is the last difficult summer," he said in July, 1919,<sup>22</sup> "the last difficult July. If we hold out through it, and we certainly shall hold out, the victory of the world revolution is assured." It was false confidence. Finland, Poland and the Baltic states established their independence. Apart from a short innings in Hungary and a yet shorter one in Bavaria communism was unable to establish itself in Western Europe. It is at least most arguable that the Bolsheviks would have pursued a more vigorous policy in the West if self-preservation had not compelled them to turn their attention to the East. The tanks which were shipped to the Volga helped to keep communism from the Rhine, and, when in May 1919, the Bolsheviks wanted to invade Bessarabia in order to relieve Rumanian pressure on Soviet Hungary, the offensive of Denikin, then being conducted with Allied arms, was undoubtedly one of the main causes preventing them.

There was a difference of opinion between Lenin and Trotsky, whether, as Lenin wanted, to hold Denikin and attack Kolchak, or, as Trotsky wanted, to hold Kolchak and attack Denikin. The question was merely one of order. The year 1919 saw the defeat both of Kolchak and Denikin. A much more important difference was that concerning the holding of Petrograd in face of Yudenitch's attack from Esthonia in October 1919. Lenin was for abandoning Petrograd as untenable, Trotsky argued that it was in all probability possible to hold Yudenitch in front of Petrograd, and, if he should make his way in, it was still possible to destroy him within the city. Trotsky proved right, and, had Lenin been allowed to have his mistaken way, it is possible that the whole revolution might have perished.

<sup>22</sup> *Izvestia*, 13 July 1919.

The beginning of 1920, with all the White armies in most patent disintegration, showed a military situation unexpectedly favourable for the Bolsheviks. Trotsky had saved them. On the other hand the economic situation was desperately bad. All Lenin's attempts to increase productivity had ended in utter failure. "The workers of the towns and of some of the villages choke in the throes of hunger. The railroads barely crawl. The houses are crumbling. The towns are full of refuse. Epidemics spread and death strikes to the right and to the left. Industry is ruined," ran a Soviet appeal in *Pravda* of 26 February 1920. The shortage of food was terrible; almost more terrible in the Russian climate was the shortage of fuel. "The railway transport position is catastrophic," wrote Lenin. "Bread transport to Moscow has ceased. . . . Decrease the individual bread ration for those workers who are not transport workers, and increase it for transport workers. Let thousands perish, but the country must be saved. Take three-fourths of the responsible workers from all departments. . . . Place 30-50 versts along both sides of the railway under martial law."<sup>33</sup> In December 1919, Lenin himself was held up in the streets of Moscow by bandits, who stole his car and forced him to walk home.

Trotsky determined to save the state at home as he had already saved it on the frontiers. His solution was that of militarized labour. When the White armies were defeated, the Red troops, instead of being demobilized, were turned into armies of labour—were set, that is, to the ordinary productive labour under military discipline. Lenin gave his consent to the policy, but the policy was Trotsky's. An attempt was made to import enthusiasm into the scheme by the invention of *subotniki*, or holidays, on which enthusiastic citizens gave themselves to voluntary labour. Lenin like the Mussolini of a later age, very publicly went out on these days with his pick and shovel. Trotsky organized things.

<sup>33</sup> Letter 213.

## CHAPTER XI

### POLAND AND THE END

THE unpopularity of military labour was only to be expected. It could hardly succeed save as a temporary experiment, and the evidence did not show much sign of its succeeding even as that. But before it had had a fair trial, it had to be abandoned owing to a new and yet severer military menace which demanded the return of all possible troops to strictly military duties. The Bolsheviks, though they had been victorious over their White opponents, had been unable to reimpose themselves on the non-Russian European countries of Finland, the Baltic States and Poland. New states had arisen in those countries, whose existence the peace treaties had recognized, though their frontiers were not yet exactly defined. Of these states by far the most important was Poland. The Poles under Pilsudski were intensely anti-Bolshevik. Yet they had given no assistance to Denikin and the Whites in their advance on Moscow in 1919, for in Denikin's slogan of "Russia shall be great, united and undivided," they saw, not unreasonably, a menace to their own newly won national freedom. Pilsudski wanted victory neither for the Bolsheviks nor for the Whites. He wanted victory over both Imperialist White and Communist Red for national movements of the various subject nationalities of the Empire. Russia in Europe he wished to see disintegrate into a number of petty, independent states—a Balkans of the East, among whom Poland would be *facile princeps*, occupying the predominant position between them and Europe and annexing to herself most generous frontiers.

It was therefore in 1920, after Denikin's defeat, that Pilsudski thought that the time had come for him to attack the Bolsheviks. He made an alliance with Petlura, the Ukrainian Nationalist leader, and at the end of April attacked on the southern front, met at first with little resistance and on 6 May entered the Ukrainian capital of Kiev. Trotsky accepted the challenge. There seems some reason to think that in the early months of 1920, the Bolsheviks in their desperate need for peace, were willing to abandon their propaganda for the overthrow of other capitalist governments. But before the Polish attack they decided that, if they must fight anyway, then they would fight for the cause, the whole cause and nothing but the cause. "There can be no doubt that the war of the Polish bourgeoisie against the Ukrainian and Russian workers and peasants will end with a workers' revolution in Poland," said Trotsky.<sup>1</sup>

The Bolsheviks counter-attacked, took Kiev in June, entered Poland in July and by the middle of August were before Warsaw itself. Both Lenin and his followers were confident that the Bolshevik troops, as they advanced into Poland, would be welcomed by the Polish workers as deliverers, that there would be a Polish revolution, which would be but the prelude to the overdue communist revolutions throughout all Europe. "We shall break the crust of Polish bourgeois resistance with the bayonets of the Red Army," he said.<sup>2</sup> He was greatly encouraged by the refusal of British and German trades-unionists to handle goods for Poland and interpreted as positive sympathy for communism a spirit which was in truth only one of intense war-weariness. "All Germany boiled up when our troops approached Warsaw," he said, and he saw a close connection between the Bolshevik invasion of Poland and the simultaneous seizure of factories by workers in Italy.

<sup>1</sup> Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed Itself*, Book II, p. 102.

<sup>2</sup> Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, p. 306.

Lenin had himself often denounced the "the infantile disease of communism"—the folly of wasting precious strength by striking when defeat was certain, of drowning judgment in enthusiasm and of mistaking the "would be" for the "is." Yet he himself now fell a victim to it. At the very moment of the Bolshevik advance on Warsaw the Second Congress of the Communist International was being held in Moscow. "The world proletariat is on the eve of decisive battles," it decided.<sup>3</sup> "... The decisive hour approaches." And, under Lenin's influence, the delegates from thirty-nine countries sketched out the programme with which they were to conquer the world. "They accepted a necessity for 'iron discipline,' for 'systematic purges to clear the party of petty-bourgeois elements,' for a 'Communist International . . . much more centralized than the Second International.'"<sup>4</sup> From these resolutions dates the policy of complete control from Moscow of all communist activities throughout the world—a policy that has proved a disastrous folly, for since its adoption communism has won no successes in any other country and has slipped back in Russia.

As the Bolsheviks advanced into Polish territory, they established a Revolutionary Committee for the organization of communism in the country, and the only terms of peace which they would offer to the Poles were terms which would have made the maintenance of any non-communist government in Poland an impossibility. The Polish army was to be limited to 50,000 men, and by its side was to be established an armed militia of urban industrial workers "under the control of the labour organizations of Russia, Poland and Norway."<sup>5</sup> Representatives of the factory workers and peasants were to take part in the peace negotiations. The Bolsheviks were to keep all "captured Polish officers and hold them as hostages for Polish communists."

But to their surprise and dismay the Bolsheviks found,

<sup>3</sup> Rosenberg, *Geschichte des Bolshevismus*, p. 161.

<sup>4</sup> Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, vol. II, p. 390.

<sup>5</sup> Trotsky, *Civil War*, vol. III, p. 392.



Lenin speaking in Sverdlov Square, Moscow, to troops being sent to the Polish front, in 1920





as they advanced, but little sympathy among the Poles. The workers and the peasants were among the first to turn out in arms against them. Here, as in all his judgments on the West, Lenin with his Marxian dogmatism blundered through underrating the influence of the two gigantic forces of religion and nationality. The Poles were Catholics and Lenin did not at all understand how much stronger an independent force the Church of Rome was than the Orthodox Church. Again the eternal hatred of the Pole was for that which came from the East. It mattered little to him with what fair promises a Russian might come armed. Had not the tsars come at first with promises of a constitution? Why should the Red Tsar with his promise of communism be any more to be trusted? The Polish peasant did not clearly know who these Bolsheviks might be. But, if they were not Russians, they were Jews, and Jew and Russian were alike hateful to the Pole.

The French, determined that Poland should survive if only in order that Russia and Germany might be separated, sent General Weygand to organize the defence of Warsaw, and in the middle of August Pilsudski counter-attacked. He found the Bolsheviks disorganized, for Tukachevsky, Trotsky's man, was in command before Warsaw, and therefore Stalin, terrified that Trotsky would emerge from the campaign with too great prestige, had arranged that Voroshiloff, in violation of orders, should separate himself from the main movement, and, when ordered to converge for the attack on Warsaw, should instead without warning go off for a private foray to Lemberg.

Pilsudski's success was therefore even more striking than that of the Bolshevik counter-attack two months before. For the Bolshevik army was not only defeated but also broken. Dreams of the world revolution faded, and the Bolsheviks were glad to make a peace at Riga, ceding the Poles complete independence and their present very generous frontiers. On the other hand the Poles had also learnt their

lesson. Thenceforward they were content with their own national freedom and did not court trouble in their attempts to break up the Russian unity through encouragement of other national movements. Poland turned to the West, where she belonged.

After Kolchak's defeat the remnants of his command had passed to a strange eccentric, Baron Ungern-Sternberg, a convert to Buddhism and a descendant of Genghis Khan, who retired into Outer Mongolia, whence he proceeded to conduct raids into Russian territory. Thence sprang a tale the end of which has not yet been told, for Ungern-Sternberg's raids gave the Bolsheviks their excuse to advance into Outer Mongolia, which in its turn gave the Japanese an excuse to advance into neighbouring Manchuria.

After Denikin's defeat and abdication the only White general still in arms against the Bolsheviks was Baron Wrangel in the Crimea. "The German baron who is a protégé of the French bourse," Trotsky contemptuously called him—he was a Baltic German—and the description is substantially true.<sup>6</sup> Yet he was politically by far the most intelligent of all the White leaders. Though himself of aristocratic origins and sympathies, he understood clearly that his only chance lay in a frank recognition that the old landed system would never return. He appointed Struve, the old revolutionary and correspondent of Lenin as his foreign secretary, and hoped that the old order might in a measure save itself by "a Left policy with Right hands."<sup>7</sup>

He was not strong enough to act alone, but the Polish invasion gave him an opportunity, and he was able to advance in June into the mainland. Doubtless the diversion which he caused weakened the Bolsheviks before Warsaw, and he may perhaps in that indirect way have played an important part in the history of the world. But again he was not strong enough to stand alone after the peace with

<sup>6</sup> Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed Itself*, vol. II, p. 193.

<sup>7</sup> Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, vol. II, p. 319.

Poland, and in November he was forced back into the Crimea and then compelled to evacuate and abandon the struggle. He was the last of the Whites.

The collapse of the attack on Warsaw was a grave blow to Lenin's easy confidence in direct communist revolution in the West. He turned now to a new and subtler hope. The non-European workers of the world had indeed nothing to lose but their chains. It should be easy to persuade them to revolution, and revolution in the East would then in its turn throw into chaos the whole economic system of the Western masters. The imperialists, Lenin shrewdly explained, had for their own base purposes put weapons both of war and of industry into their servants' hands; those weapons could be turned against the masters. If only "the reactionary, medieval influence of clergy, missionaries and other such elements"<sup>8</sup> could be counteracted, there was no reason why the whole Orient should not be plunged into chaos through the gospel of hate, and India in chaos would 'mean England in chaos. "Bourgeois democratic movements" in colonial countries could be supported, so long as they were useful, basely un-Marxian as they were.

Therefore in September 1920, there met at Baku an enormous First Congress of Peoples of the East. Zinoviev was sent to address it, and spoke in that vein of magnificent rubbish of which he was so triumphantly the master. "The real revolution will blaze up only when the 800,000,000 people who live in Asia unite with us, when the African Continent unites, when we see that hundreds of millions of people are in movement. Now we must kindle a real holy war against the British and French capitalists. . . . We must say that the hour has struck when the workers of the whole world are able to arouse tens and hundreds of millions of peasants, to create a Red Army in the East, to arm and organize uprisings in the rear of the British, to poison the existence of every impudent British officer

<sup>8</sup> Bela Kun, *The Communist International in Resolutions*, p. 89.

who lords it over Turkey, Persia, India, China." The audience jumped to its feet, shouting for a holy war against the West, and Radek yelled out exultantly, "When the capitalists of Europe say that there is a menace of a new wave of barbarism, a new wave of Huns, we reply, Long live the Red East." Enthusiasm was only slightly damped by a prosaic delegate from Turkestan who insisted on reading a catalogue of the cruelties which the Bolsheviks had committed against his people and of contrasting their record, greatly to their disadvantage, with that of the Tsarist imperialists.<sup>9</sup>

Even if Trotsky during these years was sometimes the most prominent of the Bolshevik leaders, Lenin was of course far from being a figure-head. The special contribution of Lenin to revolutionary theory and practice was the formation of the Communist party—that party of "professional revolutionaries," ready to dedicate their lives to the cause and to accept a discipline similar to that of a religious order. Without such discipline, Lenin had proclaimed that victory was not to be hoped for, in *What is to be Done* at the very beginning of the century. His special tasks during these years were to keep the Communist party united and to keep it pure in the new circumstances of power.

In the high councils of the party in these early years there was a number of men performing functions which might easily cause them to think of themselves as indispensable. There were the Jews, Zinoviev and Kamenev, ward-bosses of the two all-important cities of Petrograd and Moscow. There was the fanatical and incorruptible Dzerzhinsky, head of the dreadful Cheka, Sverdlov, the party organizer, Stalin, its secretary, through whose hands passed all the party-papers—a position which even at the time was recognized to be one of power but the full possibilities of which were foreseen by none but its holder.

<sup>9</sup> Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, vol. II, pp. 392, 393.

There was Krassin, a prosperous and competent electrical engineer, who was important to the party because he brought to it a technical experience in which it was otherwise greatly lacking. There was Chicherin, the eccentric, ascetical, woolly-headed aristocrat, able to discourse in almost every language but to talk sense in none, unable to keep appointments or to answer letters. There were Rykov and Bukharin, technical advisers with a little metaphysics thrown in. There was Trotsky, whom they hated and who could save them, and Lenin whose business it was to see that they adopted Trotsky's policy.

It was, Lenin was convinced, only because of the party that the Revolution was able to survive. "Only because the party was most strictly disciplined and because the authority of the party united all departments and institutions and because tens, hundreds, thousands and in the last account millions marched as one man when the Central Committee gave the order and only because unprecedented sacrifices were made, only for these reasons that the miracle which occurred could occur. Only for these reasons we were in a position to conquer despite the onset of the imperialists of the Entente and of the whole world."<sup>10</sup>

"The Communist party," ran the Manifesto of the 1920 Congress,<sup>11</sup> "is part of the working class, its most progressive, most class-conscious and therefore most revolutionary part. The Communist party is created by means of a selection of the best, most class-conscious, most self-sacrificing and far-sighted workers. The Communist party has no interests which are different from those of the working class." But this was emphatically not so. According to Marxian determinism indeed a man's opinions were determined by his class. To ask whether a member of the bourgeoisie ought to espouse the cause of the proletariat was a meaningless question. Yet in fact the greater number

<sup>10</sup> *Collected Works*, vol. XVII, p. 64.

<sup>11</sup> Tammarkin and Posse, *Lenin's Teaching about the Party*, p. 144.

of communist leaders from Marx and Engels down to Lenin have been of bourgeois origin. So, too, were others of Lenin's colleagues such as Chicherin, while hardly any of them had ever been "workers" in the sense that they had for long worked in a factory. It was the essence of Lenin's teaching that a "professional revolutionary" must give his whole time to his task and could not follow an ordinary vocation. It did not apparently occur to him that the economic circumstances, and by consequence on Marxian theory the opinions, of such a man, must be entirely different from those of a worker.

Before the Revolution Lenin had, as we have seen, had frequent quarrels and purges in the party. But the Tsarist police, if it did nothing else, was able to keep the party pure. For there was then but little motive to join the party for fun, though there were of course those such as Malinovsky who joined in order to sell its secrets. Then between the February and October Revolutions the numbers increased from about 80,000 to about a quarter of a million. Even after the October Revolution the prospect of membership was by no means altogether attractive. There was a considerable possibility of the collapse of the whole regime, and in such a collapse the fate of the communists was not likely to be a pleasant one, while membership involved an obligation to accept without questioning any task which authority might assign. The tasks that had to be performed in the first two years of the Revolution were often odious and often dangerous. The member might be ordered to the desperate duty of organizing secret cells and revolution in cities held by the Whites—a duty where mercy on discovery was neither expected nor received and where those who met only with death could count themselves most fortunate. Nevertheless with the prestige of success the party multiplied by about three, to three-quarters of a million during the first three years of Bolshevik rule and the period of war.

With the coming of peace the danger of the overrunning of the party by the careerist became greater. Even at the height of the civil war, at the Eighth Party Congress in March 1919, Zinoviev had called attention to this danger. At the next Party Congress, in the March of the next year, when it was thought that fighting was all but over (for the Polish War was not foreseen) Lenin spoke authoritatively on this same point. In future, conditions of admission, he said, must be more stringent, and a strict watch must be kept over members to make sure that they had not, as the phrase went, "become torn off from the masses." The complaint was raised that the communist enjoyed a higher standard of living than other Russians. It was not that the communists lived in luxury. The party only allowed to them a subsistence standard, but that was a standard enormously above that of the average Russian. Had all Russians enjoyed a subsistence standard, it was argued, it would have been easy and wise to have decreed equality between communist and non-communist, but it could not be wisdom to impose on the country's leaders a standard that would impair their efficiency. A Party Conference, however, agreed to revise the standards of members in order to make sure that they were not in any way above subsistence standards. Central Commissions of old members were established to keep watch for abuses.

Theoretically the constitution of the party was one of "democratic centralism"<sup>12</sup>—that is to say, all members were to have a free vote on policy, but, the policy decided, the minority that opposed was to join with the majority that advocated in loyally carrying it through. But in practice, in Tsarist days, it was obviously not possible to take such votes and policy was decided by the Central Committee. The Committee was, of course, elected by the full Party Congress, but, with but rare exceptions, they elected whom they were told to elect. The necessities of

<sup>12</sup> Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, vol. II, p. 366.



the civil war required still greater concentration rather than greater diffusion, and within the Central Committee of nineteen grew up a Political Bureau—Lenin and Trotsky and a shifting three—which in practice usually decided policy during these years.

There were some frank criticisms of Lenin at both the Eighth Congress in 1919 and the Ninth Congress in 1920 for his violations of the constitution through his habit of imposing on the party decisions which had been made in private by him and his intimates. The criticisms were certainly just, though the fact that they were allowed to be publicly made shows how different was the spirit of the party in Lenin's day from its spirit under Stalin. Lenin insisted on absolute submission to the will of the party when it had once been declared, but he never even wished for that absence of preliminary free discussion which Stalin has imposed. The oriental adulation with which Stalin has been surrounded would have seemed to him merely silly. Lenin, with logical materialism, was content to be hailed by Pokrovski, the Soviet Professor of History, as "a special appliance" or by an enthusiastic young poet as "a greater screw."<sup>18</sup> In theory he was prepared to suppress mutiny within the party in the most drastic fashion, but in fact he never found it necessary to expel from the party, much less to kill, any colleague of importance—except of course Malinovsky whose execution was entirely justified. In place of the cruder methods of his successor he preferred such devices as those of sending the inconvenient on foreign missions at the time when Party Congresses were coming round.

There were, as was but natural, plenty of deep differences within the party. There was the difference about Brest-Litovsk, which has already been mentioned, a difference concerning the employment of Tsarist officers in the Red Army, a difference on the advisability of proclaiming adhe-

<sup>18</sup> Fulop-Miller, *Mind and Face of Bolshevism*, p. 284.

sion to the formula of self-determination. But a controversy, far deeper than any that had previously arisen within the party, arose over Trotsky's plan of military labour. In the logic of that plan Trotsky proposed the complete abolition of all independence in the trades unions. There was opposition, led by Shlyapnikov and Lutovinov, who fought on a ground where it was peculiarly difficult for a Marxian to meet them. They claimed that they, unlike so many communists, were really and literally workers and claimed to speak for the Workers' Opposition. Lenin replied that they might be workers but they were not communists; they were anarcho-syndicalists. They answered that Lenin might be a communist but he was not a worker. As both Lenin and his critics professed to be Marxians and as it was implicit in Marx that no one could be a proper communist unless he was a worker, the logical conclusions of the argument led further than either party was willing to go. Lenin seriously disagreed with Trotsky's desire to repress the independence of the unions, but he as little agreed with the workers' demand for self-government in industry. He desired the preservation of the unions for educational reasons and to act as the spokesmen of the workers to the bureaucracy. But Lenin learnt his lesson and was careful thenceforward to associate some workers with the dictatorship of the proletariat. Yet amusingly enough even the Workers' Opposition had among their leaders, Mme. Kollontai, a lady of aristocratic origins.<sup>14</sup>

Though the Bolsheviks had for the first time in the early months of 1921 no major war on their hands, yet there was violence, lawlessness and brutality in all parts of the country and no beginning of a solution of their desperate economic problems was in sight. Then in March 1921, the regime was challenged once more by a new revolt—that of the Kronstadt sailors. Kronstadt had always been the most revolutionary town in Russia, and there was no hint

<sup>14</sup> Fulop-Miller, *Mind and Face of Bolshevism*, chap. iv and Epilogue.

of reaction about this rising. The demand of the sailors was simply that the Bolsheviks should obey their own constitution by allowing free and secret voting for the party's Central Committee. They were untinged even with democracy, for they demanded no general franchise for non-communists. They were merely honest communists. Nor were they guilty of violence. They did no harm to the officers of the Government whom they arrested. Yet the Government issued a nation-wide broadcast in which their action was denounced as part of "a general conspiracy" of Tsarist officers, Mensheviks and social revolutionaries whose purpose was to prevent the opening of trade relations with America, alleged quite falsely to be imminent. These accusations even Bolshevik historians such as N. Komatovsky have admitted to be entirely invented.<sup>15</sup>

The sailors declared "the Third Revolution" against "sanguinary Field-Marshal Trotsky, who stands up to his waist in the blood of the workers."<sup>16</sup> After some days' fighting Kronstadt was stormed, and Trotsky shot out of hand all those whom he took, only resting from his labours on one day, the anniversary of the suppression of the Paris Commune, to join Zinoviev in speeches denouncing the execution of the workers by Thiers and Gallifet fifty years before<sup>17</sup>—the kind of joke which Zinoviev may well have failed to see but which Trotsky could well appreciate and such as would greatly appeal to the ironic sense of that bloody-minded intellectual prig.

The Kronstadt shootings marked a new phase in Bolshevik history. Before them the Bolsheviks had already killed many tens of thousands, but they had killed them in the name of the class-war, and, workers though their victims often were, yet they had at least been supporters of causes which the Bolsheviks dubbed counter-revolutionary. But

<sup>15</sup> Chamberlin, *Russian Revolution*, vol. II, p. 372.

<sup>16</sup> Berkman, *The Bolshevik Myth*, p. 295. N. Komatovsky, *The Kronstadt Mutiny*.

<sup>17</sup> *The Truth about Kronstadt*, p. 20.

at Kronstadt they did not kill those whom they thought class-enemies; they called class-enemies those whom they wished to kill. The Marxian language was used as a mere rhetoric of abuse of those whom it was convenient to murder. It is a trick that has been played by Stalin in recent years. It is only fair to remember that it was Lenin and Trotsky who taught it to him.

With the Kronstadt revolt, however, Lenin saw that things had gone altogether too far. Mere murder was no remedy. War communism had failed, and even since the end of the war there had been no improvement in economic conditions. In the early days of his power Lenin had spoken with confidence that "a certain interval of at least some months" was necessary "before the successful achievement of socialism." Then it was two or three years. Now "to procure steam ploughs and machinery and electric power for so immense a country will be a task of nothing short of decades."<sup>18</sup> Dramatically he demanded a complete reversal of policy—a return to the old policy of concessions to the peasants. Like Henry VIII, his policy after the suppression of revolutions was one of executions and concessions. "In such a country," he told<sup>19</sup> the Party Congress which was sitting while the guns were rolling out over Kronstadt, "social revolution can be finally victorious only on two conditions; first, that it be supported in good time by social revolution in one of several advanced countries. The other condition is an agreement between the proletariat, which carries out its dictatorship or holds state power in its hands, and the majority of the peasant population." So requisitions were to cease. Instead the peasant was to pay a tax in kind and, having paid it, to be free to sell the rest of his produce. Freedom of trade was permitted, and attempts were made to persuade foreign capitalists to make their investments in the country. Lenin frankly admitted that the New Economic Policy was a return to capitalism but argued

<sup>18</sup> Berkman, *The Bolshevik Myth*, p. 303.

<sup>19</sup> Marcu, *Lenin*, pp. 310, 388.

that capitalism could never become the master, as long as government still remained in communist hands. It was not therefore dangerous, he argued, but the truth was, as he well knew, that it was dangerous but it was necessary. "Is not the lion escaping from our hands?" he asked.<sup>20</sup>

It was dangerous; it was necessary; it was successful. The year, 1921, was in spite of the Kronstadt rising, on the whole, incomparably the quietest of the Bolshevik regime. But the basis of its quiet and its comparative prosperity was a system of peasant proprietorship on a wider scale than Russia had ever before known. It was not communism—it was the negation of communism. Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg complained with justice, "has planted on the soil a new and powerful social element of hostility to socialism, an element which will put up a much more dangerous and tenacious resistance than was that of the aristocratic land-owners"—a resistance which, in Russia's Iron Age under Stalin, it was going to take the murder of literally millions to suppress. He had to throw himself on the peasants because the communists, his own "professional revolutionaries," had failed. He had demanded of his picked followers an utter sacrifice of all love and all ambition, but at the same time he stripped from them those comforts of religion through which alone rare souls have been capable of utter sacrifices. He barked at them that they were but animals and was surprised to find them only human. They worshipped him—which he did not ask of them—and failed him.

What else could he have expected, had he known Man? It is one of the minor marks of the limitation of the Marxians that in their language the term "Bonapartist" was always a term of abuse. The great Emperor had his faults, but his was a deeper understanding of human nature than any that communism has ever achieved. Indeed before Marx

<sup>20</sup> *Collected Works*, chap. xviii, vol. I, pp. 182, 183.



*Lenin and Stalin at Gorki's country estate near Moscow, in 1922*



was born Napoleon had already written the epitaph of the communist state. "Religion is the vaccine of the imagination; she preserves it from all dangerous and absurd beliefs. An Ignorantine Friar knows enough to tell a working man that this life is but a passage. If you take away faith from the people you will end by producing nothing but highway robbers."<sup>21</sup>

Lenin became more caustic and peevish in his criticisms. "Having to-day signed the decision of the Maly S.N.K. to vote two milliard roubles . . . for the cleaning of Moscow" he wrote,<sup>22</sup> ". . . I have come to the conclusion that my suspicions (concerning the complete rottenness in the way the whole of this business is being organized) is increasing. Millions of roubles will be taken, pilfered and stolen, and the work will not be done. . . . Can you tell me of one single province, where something was done that was not inefficient? . . . Who is responsible for this work? Are they mere clerks with pompous Soviet titles, who understand nothing, do not know their jobs and can only sign bits of paper? Or are there some *efficient* people in charge? . . . Is money being spent on buying valuable things (carbolic? cleaning implements? how much has been bought?) or is the money going towards the maintenance of official do-nothings?"

Were the complaints justified? Or was the strain already beginning to tell on the gigantic spirit cooped up in its diseased body? In August, in a letter to Adoratsky, the communist historian, about the bringing out of an edition of the Marx-Engels correspondence, he wrote, "PS.—I am on leave. Not well."<sup>23</sup> In December, just before the Ninth Congress of Soviets, the symptoms of his coming illness began to make themselves manifest. After about half an hour at his desk he lost his power of concentration; his brain wandered. He was persuaded to take a holiday

<sup>21</sup> Seige, *From Lenin to Stalin*, p. 67.

<sup>22</sup> M. Marquiste, *Report of Councils of State at the Tuileries*, 1804-5.

<sup>23</sup> Letter 224.



and he drove out from Moscow to the little village of Gorky on the outskirts of the forest. But as with other autocrats in retirement, his suspicious would not let him rest. Like Tiberius at Capri, he feared that his subordinates were undoing his work behind his back. "Inspect a little military trick," he telegraphed,<sup>21</sup> "on the part of Osinsky and Bogdanov, who in my absence to-day have brought up the question of rescinding the decisions of the Council of Labour and Defence concerning the bringing to book of people guilty of the delay over the production of Fowler ploughs. Please take note of this and use your influence against rescinding the decisions of the Councils of Labour and Defence."

He was back again in Moscow in a month or two, and in March he took part in a debate of the communist faction of the metal workers on the resolution that the "party's retreat should now cease." At the end of that month he presented the Central Committee's report on the first year of the New Economic Policy to the Eleventh Party Congress. Yet as the dark closed in around him, it was to a deeper battle than the economic that his mind naturally turned. Of the younger literati there was none to whom he went more easily than to Skortsov-Stepanov. "Write . . ." Lenin now begged him,<sup>22</sup> "a similar little volume on the history of religion and *against every* religion (among them Kantianism and any other refined idealism, or refined agnosticism) with a survey of material on the history of atheism and on the *links* between the Church and the bourgeoisie."

The sclerosis of the brain developed, but he continued unflaggingly at his work. It was the time of the Genoa Conference, and at last the Russians had their opportunity to divide the solid front of capitalist enmity by negotiating a private treaty with Germany. The French played into Russia's hands by their German policy. The strain of

<sup>21</sup> Letter 331.

<sup>22</sup> Letter 325.

such good news was too much for Lenin and at the end of May he suffered a serious hæmorrhage. It left him paralysed and dumb. They took him out again to Gorky and there he had to lie like a cripple in a chair throughout the Russian summer. One of the three bullets which Dora Kaplan had fired at him was still lodged near his spine. The doctors thought that they might give him relief if they removed it. It proved so. Summer and the sun did their work and by September he was better and believed himself cured. He could speak again. He went back to Moscow.

He took his seat again at the Council of People's Commissars and on the Party Central Committee of Soviets, and on 18 November he delivered a report to the Fourth Congress of the Comintern. Two days later he spoke to the Plenum of the Moscow Soviet. It was a meeting of triumph, for with the capture of Vladivostok the last foreign soldier had left Russian soil. The New Economic Policy, Lenin argued, had now done its work. Egged on by the greed of gain, the Ncpman had set the wheels of trade moving once more. Now was the time to strike before he became too powerful and for the State to re-establish itself as the sole trader, to establish socialism as a step on the road to communism. What was needed was industrial development. With all the world against them they could not afford to be dependent on foreign capital, as was the Tsarist regime. The natural resources of the country must be developed. "We still need the heavy industries. If we are without them we are doomed as a civilized country."<sup>28</sup> (In that same October in Italy Mussolini marched on Rome, and in November his Government was the first Government formally to recognize the Soviet.)

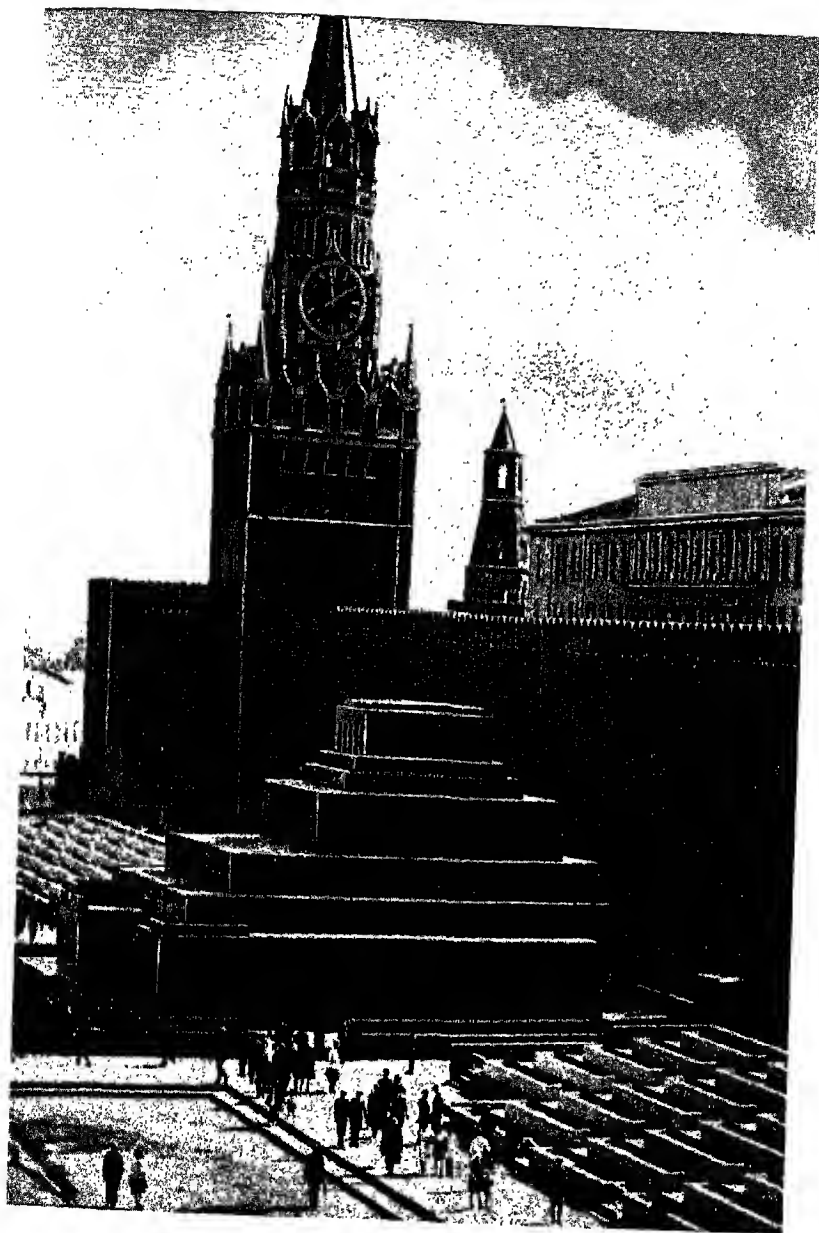
It was his last speech. In December there was a second hæmorrhage. It paralysed all his right side but left him still with his speech. He who in health had had such a

<sup>28</sup> Letter 337.

rich zest for leisure, hated it with the coming of the darkness. He continued furiously dictating. In January they took him out again to Gorky. He still ruled from there, and it was to his primal cause that he turned as the days slipped by. The last battle must be against the final enemy—God. Skortysov-Stepanov, the little atheist pamphleteer, had done his work well, had prepared the ground, and in the spring of 1923 the great drive against religion was launched with the public trials of Archbishop Cieplak, Monsignor Butkevitch and the other priests. It was only just in time. It was on Palm Sunday that Monsignor Butkevitch was awarded a martyr's death for his profession of the Christian faith. On the Tuesday of Holy Week Lenin was struck with his final and wholly incapacitating stroke, and he was a living corpse before Monsignor Butkevitch was killed on Good Friday night, in a cellar of the notorious Lubyanka.

"Is it true that Martov, too, is dying?" he whispered to his wife before the power of speech left him. He lay like a log for the rest of that year. Towards the end of it there was a slight recovery, and he was allowed to go out for a sleigh ride. He went muffled up in fur and rugs, and, a little idiotic now, carrying with him a gun which he stroked, smiling the while a foolish smile. It was the last flicker of the guttering candle. With the new year came relapse and total prostration, and on 21 January 1924, he died.

They brought his body up to Moscow where it lay in the Hall of Columns in the old Nobles Club. The thermometer was at thirty degrees below zero, but they lit great fires in the open square and, hour after hour and day after day, trainloads poured up their hundreds from every corner of Russia, and the hundreds, with the weird and dancing background of the open fires, filed in endless queue past the body of him whom a people that longed to be ruled had recognized as its master.



The Lenin Mausoleum and the Kremlin walls, Red Square, Moscow

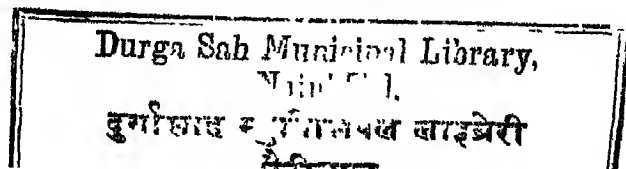


They had kept from the world how ill Lenin was, and men had thought that it was he who still ruled Russia from his mysterious retreat at Gorky even after the final stroke. But at the end it had not been so. Power was exercised by a group of six, by Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov, Kalinin and Stalin. Of these Trotsky's was by far the greatest name, and men assumed that it would be he who would step into the shoes of Lenin. Trotsky assumed it himself. Stalin was but secretary of the party, a position which was not of the first importance but which had advantages at a time when it was inconvenient to split the party, for no document could go out without the secretary's signature to it.

Trotsky was on holiday in the south when Lenin died. "When we think that Lenin may die," he had said<sup>27</sup> publicly two years before, when Lenin was still alive and powerful, "our whole life seems useless and we cease to want to live." But now, arrogant, careless, cold-blooded, he would not be bothered to return for the funeral but spent the day, if we may trust his diary, lounging like an aesthete, on a balcony, admiring the mimosa beneath his window and jotting down some "thoughts of poor Lenin." Stalin and Kamenev carried Lenin's coffin at the funeral. Stalin moved Tukachevsky, Trotsky's friend, from the command of the Moscow garrison down to Turkestan, and brought up his own friend, Voroshilov, to Moscow.

"Comrade Stalin is too rude," ran Lenin's testament, if, as is in all probability so, it is genuine. "I propose to the comrades to find a way of removing him from that position (secretary-general of the party) and appointing another man who in all respects differs from Stalin only in superiority—namely, more patient, more loyal, more polite and more attentive to comrades." But he has not proved inattentive.

<sup>27</sup> Fulop-Miller, *Mind and Face of Bolshevism*, p. 30.





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